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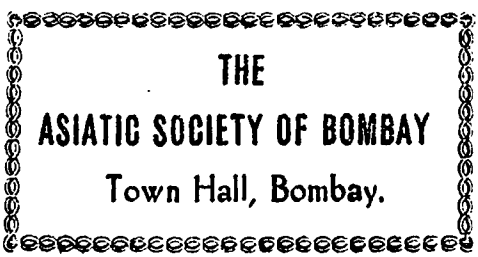

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THE MAROON.

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THE MAROON.

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AUTHOR OF

"THE RIFLE RANGERS," "THE SCALP HUNTERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE MAROON.

CHAPTER I.

SMYTHJE IN SHOOTING COSTUME.

Several days had elapsed since that on which Mr. Montagu Smythje became the guest of Mount Welcome; and during the time neither pains nor expense had been spared in his entertainment. Horses were kept for his riding—a carriage for his driving—dinners had been got up—and company invited to meet him. The best society of the Bay and the neighbouring plantations had been already introduced to the rich English exquisite—the owner of one great sugar estate, and, as society began to hear it whispered, the prospective possessor of another.

The matrimonial projects of the worthy

Custos—that had been suspected from the first —soon became the subject of much discussion.

It may be mentioned—though it is scarce necessary—that in his designs upon Smythje, Mr. Vaughan was not left all the field to himself. There were other parents in the planter fraternity of the neighbourhood blessed with good-looking daughters; and many of them, both fathers and mothers, had fixed their eyes on the lord of Montagu Castle as a very eligible sample for a son-in-law. Each of these aspiring couples gave a grand dinner; and, in turn, trotted out their innocent lambs in presence of the British "lion."

The exquisite smiled amiably upon all their efforts—adopting his distinguished position as a matter of course.

Thus merrily passed the first fortnight of Smythje's sojourn in Jamaica.

On a pleasant morning near the end of this fortnight, in one of the largest bed-chambers of Mount Welcome house—that consecrated to the reception of distinguished strangers—Mr. Smythje might have been seen in front of his mirror. He was engaged in the occupation of dressing himself—or, to speak more cor-

rectly, permitting himself to be dressed by his *valet de chambre.*

In the extensive wardrobe of the London exquisite there were dresses for all purposes and every occasion: suits for morning, dinner, and evening; one for riding, and one for driving; a shooting dress, and one for the nobler sport of the *chasse au cheval;* a dress for boating, *à la matelot;* and a grand *costume de bal.*

On the occasion in question, Mr. Smythje's august person was being enveloped in his shooting dress; and, although a West India sportsman or an English squire would have smiled derisively at such a "rig," the Cockney regarded it with complacency as being "just the thing."

It consisted of a French tunic-shaped coatee of green silk velvet, trimmed with fur; a helmet-shaped hunting cap to match; and a purple waistcoat underneath, embroidered with cord of gold bullion.

Instead of breeches and top-boots, Mr. Smythje fancied he had improved upon the costume, by encasing his limbs in long trousers. These were of dressed fawn skin, of a straw colour, and soft as the finest chamois leather. They fitted tightly around the legs, notwith-

standing that the wearer was rather deficient in that quarter. Moreover, they were strapped at the bottoms, over a pair of brightly-shining lacquered boots—another error at which a true sportsman would have smiled.

Mr. Smythje, however, was well satisfied with the style of his dress: as appeared from the conversation carried on between him and his valet Thoms, while the latter was making him ready for the field.

"Pon honaw! a demmed becoming costume!" exclaimed he, surveying himself from head to foot in the mirror. "Dawnt yaw think so, Thoms?"

"Pe Cod! it's all that, yer honner!" replied Thoms, with just enough of an Irish accent to show that he was a Welshman.

The object, for which Mr. Smythje was thus having his person apparelled, was a shooting excursion to the hills, which he designed making, in order to vary his pleasures by committing havoc among the ramier pigeons and wild guinea fowl which, he had been told, abounded there.

The projected expedition was not any grand affair by appointment—merely an ordinary, improvised thing. The sportsman intended

going alone—as the Custos on that day had some important business at the Bay; and Mr. Smythje, by a ramble through the neighbouring woods, fancied he might kill the time between breakfast and dinner pleasantly enough. This was all that was intended; and a darkey to guide him all that was needed.

"Weally!" resumed the exquisite, after some moments spent in enthusiastic admiration of his person, "weally, Thoms, these Queeole queetyaws are chawming—positively chawming! Nothing in the theataw or opwa at all to compare with thenr. Such lovely eyes! such divine figaws! and such easy conquests! Ba Jawve! I can count a dozen alweady! Haw, haw!" added he, with a self-gratulatory giggle, "it's but natywal that—dawnt yaw think so, Thoms?"

"Parfectly natyeral, your honner," replied Thoms, "considherin yer honner's good looks."

"Aw haw! that's it, Thoms—that's it. They can't wesist."

Either the lady-killer was not content with his twelve easy conquests, and wished to have the number more complete by making it "the baker's dozen"—either this, or he was uncer-

tain about his victory over one of the twelve —as would appear by the dialogue that followed between him and his confidential man.

"Hark yaw, Thoms!" said he, approaching the valet in a more serious way; "yaw are an exceedingly intelligent fellaw—yaw are, 'pon honnaw."

"Thank yer honner. It's keepin' yer honner's company has made me so."

"Nevaw mind—nevaw mind what—but I have observed yaw intelligence."

"It's at yer honner's humble service."

"Ve-well, Thoms; ve-well! I want you t employ it."

"In what way, yer honner? anything yer honner may desire me to do."

"Yaw know the niggaw girl—the bwown girl with the tawban, I mean?"

"Miss Vaghan's waitin'-maid?"

"Exactly—ya-as. Yolaw, or something of the sawt, is the queetyaw's name."

"Yis—Yowla; that's her name, yer honner."

"Well, Thoms, I pwesume you have excellent oppwotunities of holding convawsation with haw—the niggaw, I mean?"

"Plenty of oppurtunity, yer honner. I've talked with her scores of times."

"Good. Now, the next time yaw talk with haw, Thoms, I want you to pump haw."

"Pump her! what's that, yer honner?"

"Why, dwaw something out of haw!"

"Feth! I don't understan' yer honner."

"Not undawstand! yaw are stoopid, Thoms."

"Keeping yer honner's company——"

"What, fellaw? keeping my company make yaw stoopid?"

"No, yer honner; ye didn't hear me out. I was goin' to say, that keeping yer honner's company would soon take that out o' me."

"Haw—haw—that's diffwent altogethaw. Well, listen now, and I'll make yaw undawstand me. I want you to talk with this Yolaw, and dwaw some seekwets out of haw."

"Oah!" answered Thoms, dwelling a long time upon the syllable, and placing his forefinger along the side of his nose. "*Now* I comprehend yer honner."

"All wight—all wight."

"I'll manage that, don't fear me; but what sort of saycrets does yer honner want me to draw out af her?"

"I want yaw to find out what she says about *me*—not the niggaw, but haw mistwess."

"What the negur says about her mistress?"

"Thoms, yaw are intolawably stoopid this mawning. Not at all—not at all; but what haw mistress says about *me—me*."

"Oh! fwhat Miss Vaghan says about yer honner?"

"Pwecisely."

"Faith! I'll find that out—ivery word af it."

"If yaw do, Thoms, I shall be your debtaw faw a guinea."

"A guinea, yer honner!"

"Ya-as; and if yaw execute yaw commission clevawly, I shall make it two—two guineas, do yaw heaw?"

"Never fear, yer honner. I'll get it out of the negur, if I should have to pull the tongue from between thim shinin' teeth af hers!"

"No, Thoms—no, my good fellaw! There must be no woodness... Wemember, we are guests heaw, and Mount Welcome is not an hotel. Yaw must work by stwategy, not stwength, as Shakespeaw or some other of those skwibbling fellaws has said. No doubt stwategy will win the day."

And with this ambiguous observation—ambiguous as to whether it referred to the issue

of Thoms's embassy, or his own success in the wooing of Miss Vaughan—Mr. Montagu Smythje closed the conversation.

Thoms now gave the last touch to the sportsman's toilet, by setting the hunting-cap on his head, and hanging numerous belts over his shoulders—among which were included a shot-pouch, a copper powder-horn, a pewter drinking flask with its cup, and a hunting-knife in its leathern sheath.

Thus equipped, the sportsman strode stiffly from the apartment; and wended his way towards the great hall, evidently with the design of encountering the fair Kate, and exhibiting himself in his killing costume.

CHAPTER II.

A COCKNEY SPORTSMAN.

THAT he had obtained the interview he sought, and that its result had gratified him, might be inferred from the complacent smile that played upon his countenance as he sallied forth from the house. Moreover, in crossing the two or three hundred yards of open ground which separated the dwelling from the wooded slope of the ridge, he walked with an exalted, gingerly step—occasionally glancing back over his shoulder, as if conscious of being observed.

He *was* observed. Two faces could be seen at a window, one of which Mr. Smythje knew to be that of Kate Vaughan. The other, of darker hue, was the face of the maid Yola.

Both were set in smiles. It did not matter to Mr. Smythje whether the maid smiled or not; but he fondly fancied he could distinguish a pleased expression on the countenance of the mistress. He was at too great

a distance to be certain; but he had little doubt of its being a look of intense admiration that was following him through his fine paces.

Had he been near enough to translate the expression more truly, he might have doubted whether he was the object of so much admiration; and had the remark made by Yola to her mistress reached his ear, with the clear ringing laughter it called forth, his doubts would have had a melancholy confirmation.

"He berry gran, missa!" said the maid. "He like cock-a-benny turned yellow-tail!" —a plantation proverb, which, translated into plain English, means, that the coarse and despised little fish, the "cock-a-benny," had become metamorphosed into the splendid and esteemed species known among the negroes as the "yellow-tail."

As the sportsman neither heard the remark nor the laugh it elicited, he was enabled to carry his self-esteem into the woods unhurt and undiminished.

At his heels walked an attendant—a negro boy, whose sole costume consisted of an Osnaburgh shirt, with a huge game-bag slung over his shoulders, and hanging down to his hams.

It was the veritable Quashie, post-boy, horse-boy, and factotum.

Quashie's duties on the present occasion were to guide the English buckra to the best shooting ground among the hills, and carry the game when killed. As there was no dog —pigeon and *pintado* shooting not requiring the aid of this sagacious animal—Quashie was to act also as finder and retriever.

For a full mile over hill and dale, through "brake, brush, and scaur," tramped the ardent sportsman—his Ethiopian attendant, keeping like a shadow at his heels. Still not a head of game had as yet been bagged. Ramiers were scarce and shy, and as for the beautiful speckled hen—the exotic *Numida meleagris*—not as much as the crest of one could be seen. Their shrill skreek, like the filing of a frame saw, could be occasionally heard afar off; and the hope of getting sight of one enticed the sportsman still further into the forest.

Another mile was passed over, and another hour spent, almost equally unfruitful in events. A few ramiers had been sighted and shot at; but the thick corselet of feathers, that covers the bold breasts of these beautiful birds, seemed impenetrable to the shot of a gun;

at least, they proved so to the double-barrelled "Manton" of the London sportsman.

Another mile traversed—another hour spent—still nothing bagged!

His want of success did not hinder the sportsman from growing hungry; and, at the end of his third mile, he began to feel a certain void about the epigastric region that called for viands. He knew that the bag which Quashie carried contained a luncheon that had been carefully provided and packed by the major-domo of Mount Welcome. It was time to examine this luncheon; and, seating himself under the shadow of a spreading tree, he directed the darkey to draw it forth.

Nothing loth was Quashie to respond to this request; for the weight of the bag, which he had been wincing under for some hours, and its distended sides, promised pickings for himself—after the grand buckra should satisfy his hunger.

Certainly, there appeared enough for both, and to spare: for on "gutting" the game-bag, a whole capon was turned out upon the grass, with sundry slices of bread, ham, and tongue, and all the paraphernalia of salt, pepper, and mustard.

A bottle of claret was found at the bottom of the bag; which, in addition to the flask of *eau de vie* that the sportsman himself carried, and which he now laid aside to disencumber him, was liquid enough to wash down the savoury solids which the thoughtful steward had provided.

A knife and fork were also turned out; and, as Mr. Montagu Smythje was more habile in the handling of these weapons than he was in the use of a gun, in a trice the capon was cut into convenient pieces. In an equally short space of time, many of these pieces had disappeared between his teeth, in company with sundry slices of the ham and tongue.

Quashie was not invited to partake; but sat near the grand buckra's feet, wistfully watching his movements, as a dog would his master similarly occupied.

As the masticatory powers of the Cockney sportsman appeared to be of no mean order, Quashie's look began to betray astonishment, mingled with a growing dread that the "oughts" he might be called upon to eat would be neither very numerous nor very bulky. Half the capon had already disap-

peared, with a large proportion of the odd slices of ham and tongue!

"I b'lieve de dam buckra glutton za gwine eat 'um all up—ebbery bit!" was Quashie's mental, and not very good-humoured, soliloquy. "Ay, an' drink 'um up too—ebbery drop!" continued he, in thought, as he saw Mr. Smythje quaff off a full cup of the claret without taking the vessel from his lips.

Shortly after, another cup was poured into the same capacious funnel: for the exercise he had undergone, combined with the warmth of the day, had rendered the sportsman *drouthy*.

To the great chagrin of Quashie, and the no small mortification of Smythje himself, a worse misfortune than that of its being drunk befell the remainder of the claret. On setting down the bottle, after filling his cup for the second time, the sportsman had performed the act in an unskilful manner. The consequence was that the bottle, losing its balance, toppled over; and the *balance* of the claret trickled out upon the grass.

Both Quashie's temper and patience were put to a severe test; but the buckra's appetite being at length appeased, the *débris* of the

feast—still a considerable quantity—remained to Quashie's share; and he was directed to fall to and make his best of it.

The darkey was not slow in complying with the order; and, from the manner in which he went to work, it was evident, that unless Mr. Smythje should make better shooting after luncheon than he had done before it, the game-bag would go back to the house much lighter than it had left it.

While Quashie was masticating his meal, the refreshed sportsman—his spirits elevated by the claret he had quaffed—bethought him of taking a stroll by himself. There was no time to be wasted—as the contingency of having to return to Mount Welcome with an empty bag had already begun to suggest itself; and after the sanguine expectations which his grand sporting costume must have given rise to—assisted by some little bravado he had indulged in while leave-taking—his failing to fulfil these expectations could not be otherwise than humiliating.

He resolved, therefore, to return to his shooting with a more serious earnestness, and, if possible, make up for the deficiencies of the morning.

Slinging on his horn and pouch, and laying hold of his gun, the sportsman once more started off, leaving his retriever busily employed in polishing off the "drumsticks" of the capon.

CHAPTER III.

STALKING A TURKEY.

It almost seemed as if the divine patron of the chase—the good St. Hubert—had regarded the spilt wine as an oblation to himself, and, in return, had consented to give the sportsman success.

Scarce had the latter advanced two hundred yards from the spot where he had lunched, when his eyes were gratified by the spectacle of a large, fine-looking bird, perched upon the top of a tree stump.

At first he believed it to be a guinea-hen, but its dusk colour—it was brownish-black—forbade that supposition. It had a naked head and neck, just like a turkey; and in several other respects it resembled this well-known bird.

"A tawkey it is!" exclaimed Smythje, after scanning it a little. "A wild tawkey, by Jawve!"

The London exquisite had heard, somehow

or somewhere, that the wild turkey was indigenous to America, and, of course, also to Jamaica—since Jamaica is part of America.

However erroneous the deduction, the reasoning satisfied Smythje; and, firmly convinced that he saw before him a wild turkey, he determined on taking measures to *circumvent* it.

The stump upon which the bird was perched, stood upon the edge of an opening, about a hundred yards from the spot where Smythje first came in sight of it.

To insure success, the sportsman dropped upon his knees, and crawled forward impressively, but with due caution. If he could only make thirty yards in advance, he knew his gun was good for the other seventy.

In fine, after considerable damage done to his fawn-skin trousers, the thirty yards were accomplished, and still the turkey remained upon its perch.

The gun was brought to bear upon the bird; Joe Manton did the work; and, simultaneously with the "bang," the turkey was seen to tumble over, disappearing as it did so from the top of the stump.

The overjoyed sportsman hastened forward

to secure his game; and soon arrived at the spot where he expected to find it.

To his surprise it was not there!

Had it taken to wing and escaped?

Impossible! He had seen it fall, and without a flutter. It must have been shot quite dead? It could not have come to life again?

He searched all about—going round the stump at least a dozen times, and carefully scrutinising every inch of the ground for a score of yards on each side—but no turkey could be found!

Had the unlucky sportsman been at all doubtful of the fact of his having killed the bird, he would have given up the search in despair. But upon this point he was as certain as of his own existence; and it was that which rendered him so pertinacious in his endeavours to find it. He was determined to leave neither stick nor stone unturned; and, to aid him in the prosecution of his search, he called loudly for his retriever Quashie.

But to his repeated calls no Quashie came; and Mr. Smythje was forced to the conclusion that the darkey had either gone to sleep, or had strayed away from the spot where he had left him.

He had some thoughts of going back to look for Quashie; but, while he was meditating on the matter, an idea occurred to him, which promised to explain the mysterious disappearance of the bird.

The stump upon which the "turkey" had been perched could scarcely have been termed a *stump*. It was rather the trunk of a large tree, that had been abruptly broken off below the limbs, and still stood some fifteen or twenty feet in height, erect and massive as the tower of some ruined castle. Though quite a dead wood, and without any branches of its own, it was, nevertheless, garnished with verdure. A complete matting of vines that grew around its roots, and parasites that sprang from its decaying sides, inclosed it with a tortuous trellis-work—so that only near its top could the shape of the old tree be distinguished.

At first the sportsman supposed that his game had dropped down among the ragged shubbery; and he searched the whole of this with elaborate minuteness, but in vain.

It now occurred to him—and this was the idea that promised the *éclaircissement* spoken of—that the bird had *not* fallen from the

stump, but had dropped dead upon the top of it, and there might still be lying!

The dead wood, which, at its broken summit, appeared to be some five or six feet in diameter, rendered this conjecture probable enough; and Smythje resolved upon putting it to the proof, by climbing to the top. He would have appointed Quashie to the performance of this feat; but Quashie *non esset inventus.*

Several thick, cable-like vines, that struggled up to the summit, promised an easy means of ascent; and, although the Cockney could climb about as dexterously as a shod cat, he fancied there could be no great difficulty in attaining the top of the dead wood.

Throwing aside his gun, he entered enthusiastically upon the attempt.

The feat was not so easy of performance but that it cost him an exertion. Stimulated, however, by the desire to *retrieve* his game and the reflections about the game bag, already alluded to, he put forth his utmost energies, and succeeded in reaching the summit.

His conjecture proved correct. There lay the bird—not *on* the stump, but *in* it—at the

bottom of a large cylinder-shaped concavity, which opened several feet down into the heart of the dead wood. There it was, dead as the tree itself.

The sportsman could not restrain himself from uttering a cry of joy—as he saw his fine game at length secure within his reach.

It proved not exactly within his reach, however: as, upon kneeling down and stretching his arm to its full length, he found that he could not touch the bird, even with the tips of his fingers.

That signified little. It would only be necessary for him to descend into the cavity, and this he could easily do: as it was wide enough, and not over four feet in depth.

Without further reflection, he rose to his feet again and leaped down into the hole.

It would have been a wiser act if he had remembered the prudent counsel of the paternal frog, and looked before leaping. That was one of the most unfortunate leaps Mr. Smythje had ever made in his life. The brown surface upon which the bird lay, and which looked so deceptively solid, was nothing more than a mass of rotten heartwood, honeycombed with long decay. So flimsy was it in structure, that

though supporting a dead bird, it gave way under the weight of a living man; and the lord of Montagu Castle shot as rapidly out of sight as if he had leaped feet foremost from the mainyard of the *Sea Nymph* into the deepest soundings of the Atlantic!

CHAPTER IV.

SMYTHJE EMBARRASSED BY HIS BOOTS.

Rapid as was the pitch, and dark the abyss into which it was made, the sportsman was not killed. Neither was he much hurt: for the "punk" through which he had pitched, though not firm enough to support him, had offered some resistance to the velocity of his descent; and towards the bottom he had settled down more gradually.

But though neither killed nor yet stunned by the fall, he was for awhile as completely deprived of his senses as if he had been both. Surprise had bereft him not only of the power of speech, but of thought as well; and for some moments he was as quiet as Jack, after being jerked into his box.

After a time, however, feeling that, though badly scared, he was not much hurt, his consciousness began to return to him; and he made a scramble to recover his legs: for in going down, he had somehow got doubled up in a sort of tailor fashion.

He found his feet after an effort; and, as he saw that light came from above, he raised his eyes in that direction.

It took him some time to make out the exact character of the place in which he was: for a thick "stoor" was swimming around him, that not only impeded his sight, but having entered his mouth and nostrils, had inducted him into a violent fit of sneezing.

The dust however gradually thinned away; and Smythje was enabled to "define his position."

Above his head was a clear circular patch, which he knew to be the sky; whilst all around him was a dark brown wall, rising many feet beyond the reach of his outstretched arms. He became conscious that he was standing in the concavity of a huge upright cylinder, with a surface of corrugated rotten wood circling all around him.

As his senses grew clearer—along with the atmosphere—he arrived at a better understanding of the mishap that had befallen him. He did not, at first, regard it in the light of a *misfortune*—at least, not a very heavy one—and he was rather disposed to laugh at it as a ludicrous adventure.

It was not till he began to think of climbing out, and had actually made the attempt, that he became aware of a difficulty hitherto unsuspected; and the contemplation of which at once inspired him with a feeling of alarm.

A second attempt to get out was unsuccessful as the first; a third equally so; a fourth had no better issue; a fifth was alike a failure; and after the sixth, he sank down upon the rotten rubbish in a state bordering on despair.

Well might he have exclaimed,

"*Facilis descensus Averni, sed revocare gradum.*"

But the mind of Mr. Smithje was now under the influence of an indescribable awe, which excluded all thoughts of the classic.

When reflection came to his aid, it was only to make more certain the fearful reality of his situation. The more he reflected upon it, the more he became convinced of the peril into which his rash leap had precipitated him.

It was not simply a slight mishap—a ludicrous adventure—he no longer saw it in that light. Neither was it a mere misfortune; but a positive danger—the danger of his life.

Yes, his life was most certainly in danger;

and he was not slow in arriving at this knowledge. The chain of inductive reasoning that led to it was but too palpably clear—every link of it—from premisses to conclusion. If he could not help himself out of the prison, in which by his unlucky leap he had incarcerated himself, who was to help him?

Hope could not long dwell upon Quashie. The darkey had been left some distance off; and since he had not answered to his calls, he must be asleep or straying. In either case—or even if awake and still on the ground of the bivouac—what chances would Quashie have of finding him?

Who was to find him, if not Quashie? Ah! who else? Who was likely to come that way?

Not a soul! The tree that contained him stood in the midst of a wild tract—a solitary forest all around—no roads, no paths—he had observed none. He might be there for a month without a human being approaching the place; and a week would be enough to finish him! Yes, in one week, perhaps far less, he might expect to die of starvation! The prospect was appalling.

And it so appalled him, that again his mind gave way under it, and relapsed into the stupor of despondence.

It is not natural that one should sink at once into utter despair, without making an extreme effort. The instinct of self-preservation—common to the lowest animals—will nerve even the weakest spirit of man. That of Montagu Smithje was none of the strongest, and had given way at the first shock; but, after a time, a reaction arose, stimulating him to make a fresh effort for his life.

Once more starting to his feet, he attempted to scale the steep walls that encircled him; but the attempt, as before, proved a failure.

In this last trial, however, he discovered that his exertions were greatly hindered by three special *impedimenta*—the tight fawn-skin trousers that, moistened with perspiration, clung closely around his legs; his boots; but, above all, the straps that bound boots and trousers together.

To get rid of these obstacles became his next thought; and the execution of such a design might appear easy enough.

On trial, however, it proved a most difficult undertaking.

From the confined space in which he stood, he could not get into a stooping attitude, so as to reach down to the straps and unbutton them; and so long as these remained buttoned, it was impossible to take off the boots. He could squat down tailor-fashion, as he had already done; but, in that posture the straps became so tightened, that to unbutton them was clearly out of the question. The delicate fingers of the dandy were unequal to the effort.

"Necessity is the mother of invention." This adage held good in Smythje's case: for it just then occurred to him to unfasten his *suspenders* instead of his straps, and divest himself of his under garments all at once!

For this purpose he rose to his feet; but in doing so, a better idea suggested itself: to cut off his fawn-skin inexpressibles just above the knees, and thus free boots, straps, and pantaloon bottoms all together!

He had left his hunting knife by his brandy flask, and both on the ground of the bivouac. Fortunately, however, a penknife, which he carried in his waistcoat pocket, would answer even better; and, drawing it forth, he proceeded to execute his design.

A cross-section of the fawn-skins, just above the knees, was at once made; and then—by the alternate application of toe to heel—boots, trouser-bottoms, and all, were cast simultaneously, and Smythje stood in his stockings!

He did not remain long inactive. Danger urged him to exert himself; and once more he essayed to scale the walls of his tree prison.

Alas! after many efforts—many oft-repeated, but unsuccessful clamberings—he was forced back to the appalling conviction that the thing was impossible.

He could get up within about four feet of the orifice; but there the surface, which had been long open to the atmosphere, was worn so smooth by the weather—besides being still wet and slippery from late rains—that he could find no holding place upon it; and at every endeavour to grasp the rotten wood, he lost his balance, and fell backward to the bottom.

These falls frequently stunned him, almost knocking the breath out of his body. They were from a considerable height—ten or twelve feet—and, but for the soft rubbish be-

low, that modified the shock as he came down, one such descent would have been sufficient to cripple him for life.

Once more his spirit sank within him. Once more Smythje yielded to despair.

CHAPTER V.

A TROPIC SHOWER.

When reflection again favoured the unfortunate man—which it did after a short time had passed over—his thoughts took a new turn.

He made no further attempt at climbing out. Repeated trials had fully convinced him of the impracticability of that; and he was now satisfied that his only hope lay in the chance of Quashie or some one else coming that way.

It is true that this chance appeared grievously doubtful. Even should one pass near the dead-wood, how was he to know that he, Smythje, was inside it? Who would suspect that the old tree was hollow? and, least of all, that a human being was inclosed within its cylindrical cell—buried alive, as it were, in this erect wooden sarcophagus?

A person passing might see the gun lying upon the ground outside; but that would be no clue to the whereabouts of its owner.

After all, some one *might* be passing, and as he could not be *seen,* his only hope lay in making himself *heard.*

The moment this thought came into his mind, he commenced crying out at the highest pitch of his voice.

He regretted that he had not done so before: since some one might have passed in the interim.

After falling in, he had shouted several times during the moments of his first surprise: but while making his attempts to clamber out, he had desisted—the earnestness of his exertions having reduced him to silence.

Now that he comprehended the necessity of making a noise, he determined to make up for his former remissness; and he continued to send forth scream after scream with all the power of his lungs, at intervals varying his voice from an abrupt sharp screech, to the more prolonged and dismal monotone of a groan.

For nearly an hour did he continue this melancholy *cavatina,* without receiving any response beyond the echoes of his own voice, which reverberated through the concavity in hollow, sepulchral tones—a mournful mono-

logue of alternate groanings and howlings, interrupted at intervals as the utterer paused to listen for a response.

But none came. No change took place in his situation, except one that was calculated to make it still more deplorable and forlorn. As if his lugubrious appeals had invoked the demon of the storm, the sky above became suddenly overcast with heavy black clouds; from which came pouring rain, such as might have fallen during the forty days of the deluge!

It was one of those tropic showers, where the water gushes from the sky, not in single, isolated drops, but in long, continuous streams; as if heaven's canopy was one great shower-bath, of which the string had been jerked and tied down.

Though well sheltered from wind, the unfortunate Smythje had no roof—no cover of any kind—to shield him from the rain, which came down upon his devoted head, as though the spout of a pump had been directed into the hollow of the dead wood. Indeed, the funnel-shaped orifice, which was wider than the rest of the concavity, aided in conducting a larger quantity of rain into it; and, but

that the water found means of escape, by percolating through the mass of dry rubbish below, Mr. Smythje might have been in danger of a more sudden death than by starvation: since, as he himself afterwards asserted, there fell sufficient water to have "dwowned" him.

If not drowned, however, he was well *douched.* There was not a stitch of clothing upon his person that was not wetted through and through: the silk velvet shooting-coat, the purple vest, and what remained of the fawn-skin trousers, all were alike soaked and saturated. Even his whiskers had parted with their crisp rigidity; the curls had come out of the tails of his moustaches; his hair had lost its amplitude; and all—hair, whiskers, and moustaches—hung dripping and draggled.

In that melancholy image of manhood that stood shivering in the hollow tree, it would have required a quick imagination to have recognized Mr. Montagu Smythje, the *débonnaire* sportsman of the morning.

Lugubrious as were his looks, they were nothing to compare with his thoughts. There were moments when he felt angry—angry at his ill-fortune—angry at Quashie—angry at Mr. Vaughan, for having provided an attend-

ant so inattentive to his duties. There were moments when he felt spiteful enough to swear. Yes, in that fearful crisis, Smythje *swore*—the owner of Mount Welcome and Quashie being alternately the object of his abjurations. Jamaica, too, came in for a share of his spite—its pigeons and Guinea hens, its trees, and, above all, its wild turkeys!

"The howwid Island!" he cried, in his anguish; "would to ma Makeaw I had nevaw set foot on its shaws!"

What, at that moment, would he not have given to be once more in his "deaw metwopolis?" Gladly would he have exchanged his tree-prison for a chamber in the King's Bench—for a corner in the meanest cell which the Old Bailey could have afforded him!

Poor Smythje! he had not yet reached the climax of his sorrows. A new suffering was in store for him—one in comparison with which all he had undergone was but a mild endurance. It was only when that slimy thing came crawling over his feet, and began to entwine itself round his ankles—its cold clammy touch painfully perceptible through

his silk stockings—it was only then that he felt something like a sensation of real horror!

He was on his legs at the moment; and instantly sprang upward, as if coals had been suddenly applied to the soles of his feet. But springing upward did not avail him, since it only resulted in his dropping down again on the same spot; and, as he did so, he felt writhing beneath his feet the slippery form of a *serpent!*

CHAPTER VI.

A DANGEROUS DANCE.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt was Smythje standing upon a snake, or rather, *dancing* upon one: for as he felt the scaly creature crawling and writhing under his feet with a strong muscular action, it was contrary to human nature that he should remain at rest upon such a perilous pedestal.

For some moments he hopped about upon this dangerous *daïs*, expecting every instant to feel the sharp sting of a bite. Any one who could have looked on him at that crisis would have seen a face white with horror, eyes starting from their watery sockets, and dripping hair and whiskers doing their best to stand on end.

Through his dark sky of dread a gleam of light flashed upon his spirit: he remembered having heard that in Jamaica there is no *poisonous* serpent.

It was but a spark of consolation. If the reptile could not *sting*, it could *bite*; and, being such an enormous creature as to cover with its coils the whole floor of his *cylindric* chamber, its bite should be a formidable one.

Perhaps, after all, it was not a single snake? Perhaps there was a whole family of serpents, crawling one over another, and wreathing fantastic figures of eight beneath his feet?

If so—and this was probable enough—he might be bitten by all; repeatedly bitten—torn to pieces—devoured!

What matter whether they were poisonous or not? He might as well perish from their fangs, as by their teeth!

Fortunate it was for Smythje that the snakes—for his conjecture that there were more than one was correct—fortunate for him that they were still half asleep, else the danger he dreaded might have come to pass. As it was, the whole band of reptiles had just been aroused from a state of torpidity—the wash of cold rain having reached them in their crushed cave, and scattered the mutual coil in which they had been cosily slumbering. Still only half awakened, in the confusion of their ideas they could not

distinguish friend from foe; and to this was Mr. Smythje indebted for the circumstance that his skin, and even his silk stockings, still remained intact.

Notwithstanding this, his dread remained undiminished, and incited him to a fresh effort at escape.

Only one mode suggested itself: to clamber up the "chimney" as far as he could go, and by that means get out of reach of the reptiles.

On conceiving this new design, he sprang upward, shaking the serpent coils from his feet; and, after a few seconds of scratching and scrambling, he arrived at an elevation of some ten feet from the bottom of the tree.

Here a slight projection offered a tolerable support for his posteriors; and, setting his toes well against the opposite side, he did his very best to sustain himself in position.

It was an irksome effort, and could not have lasted long—as to his consternation he soon discovered.

His strength would soon give way, his toes become cramped and nerveless; and then, losing his hold, he must inevitably drop down among the monsters below—who, perhaps, in

a second collision with him, would be less chary about using their teeth?

The prospect of such a terrible fate stimulated him to put forth all his energies in preserving his balance and his place—at the same time that it drew from him cries of the keenest anguish.

His cries at this crisis proved his salvation. His strength was wellnigh exhausted; and he was on the point of letting go, when, just then, an object came before his upturned eyes that determined him to hold on a little longer—even should his toes be torn out of their joints.

Above him, and half filling the orifice of the hollow, appeared an enormous head, with a face black as Erebus, and two yellowish-white eyes shining in the midst of it. No other feature was at first seen; but presently a double row of great white teeth appeared, gleaming between a pair of freshly-opened purplish lips, of a massive, cartilaginous structure.

In the confusion of his senses Smythje was, for the moment, inclined to believe himself between two demons—one below, in the shape of a monstrous serpent, and the other above him, in human form: for the grinning white

teeth, and yellow eyeballs rolling in sockets of sable ground, presented an appearance sufficiently demoniac.

Of the two demons, however, he preferred the company of the one who bore something of his own shape; and when a huge black arm —like the trunk of a young tree—with the hand of a Titan attached to it, was stretched down to him, he did not decline to take it; but eagerly clutching at the gigantic paw thus proffered, he felt himself raised upward, as lightly as if elevated upon the extremity of a "see-saw"!

In another instant he found himself upon the summit of the dead-wood, his deliverer standing by his side.

So much light rushing all at once into the eyes of the rescued Smythje, instead of enabling him to see distinctly, quite blinded him; and it was only by the touch that he knew a man was by his side, who, the next moment, lifting him with one arm carried him down to the bottom of the tree, with as much apparent facility as if he, Smythje, had been a little infant!

On reaching the ground, Smythje's eyes had become sufficiently strengthened to bear the

light; and then he saw, in full length, the individual who had rescued him from his perilous dilemma. He was a jet-black negro of colossal size, nearly naked, with a number of straps and strings passing over his shoulders, to which were suspended horns, bullet-pouches, and other accoutrements of a more mysterious kind. His head-dress was equally odd as the rest of his costume, and consisted simply of the crown of an old beaver hat, with the brim closely trimmed off just above the ears. This gave a ludicro-comic expression to the face, which, though black as ebony, was otherwise not disagreeable.

Still there was a wild look about the man, which, combined with his gigantic size, was calculated to impress one with the idea of his being no ordinary character.

Nor was he, for the deliverer of Mr. Smythje was no other than our old acquaintance Quaco.

Smythje knew nothing of the Maroon. It might be a robber into whose hands he had fallen; but even so, the Cockney was no longer in a condition to be frightened. All fear had been scared out of him by his adventure with the snakes; and perceiving, from his amiable

smiles, that his deliverer meant him no harm, he proceeded to give the latter a full account of all that had befallen him.

As soon as the sportsman had finished his narrative, Quaco, without saying a word, scrambled back to the summit of the dead-wood.

Fastening a cord, which he carried up with him, around the top of the stump, he fearlessly let himself down into the dark, snake-tenanted chamber, which Mr. Smythje had been so glad to get out of!

He had not been more than half a minute out of sight, when a glittering object was seen projected above the top of the stump. It was of serpent form, and bright yellow colour. Wriggling and writhing, it hung, for a moment, suspended in the air; and then, yielding to the laws of gravitation, it came down with a thump upon the turf. Its large size, and its lines of black and gold, rendered it easy of identification as the "yellow snake" of Jamaica (*chilabothrus inornatus*).

Scarce had it touched the ground when a second and similar projectile was ejected from the hollow stump; and then a third—and

another, and yet another, until no less than a dozen of these hideous reptiles lay scattered over the grass, to the no small consternation of Smythje, who, however, took care to keep well out of their reach.

After the dead-wood had been delivered of its last snake, an object of a far different character was seen to issue forth in a similar manner. It was a misshapen mass, of a dirty buff colour, and proved, upon inspection, to be one of Mr. Smythje's boots, still incased in its fawn-skin covering! Its mate soon followed; and then, the "wild turkey," which had led the sportsman into his deplorable dilemma, and which now, with half its plumage gone, and the other half "drooked" and bedraggled, offered but a poor chance for the garnishing of his game-bag.

Smythje, however, too well contented at escaping with his life, thought no more of his game-bag, nor of anything else, but getting back to Mount Welcome by the shortest route possible.

His boots being restored to him, he lost no time in drawing them on, leaving the bottoms of his trousers in the companionship of the

worthless "turkey," which Quaco, better acquainted with the ornithology of Jamaica, on coming out of the hollow tree, assured him, was, after all, no turkey, but only a turkey-buzzard—a John Crow—in short, a stinking vulture!

CHAPTER VII.

QUASHIE IN A QUANDARY.

During all this time, where was Quashie?

Mr. Smythje did not know, and no longer did he care. Too glad to get away from the scene of his unpleasant adventure, he made no inquiry about his negligent squire; nor did he even think of going back to the place where he had left him. His deliverer had offered himself as a guide; and the road by which he conducted the sportsman from the dead-wood led in quite another direction. As to the empty game-bag left with Quashie, it made no difference what became of that; and, for the hunting-knife and brandy-flask, no doubt the darkey would see to them.

In this conjecture Mr. Smythje hit the nail upon the head—at least so far as regarded the brandy-flask. It was by seeing too well to it, that Quashie had lost all sight of everything else—not only of the duties he had been appointed to perform, but of the whole earth

and everything upon it. The buckra had not been twenty minutes out of his presence, when Quashie, by repeated application of the brandy-flask to his lips, brought his optical organs into such a condition, that he could not have told the difference between a turkey and a turkey-buzzard any more than Mr. Smythje himself.

The drinking of the *eau de vie* had an effect upon the negro the very reverse of what it would have had upon an Irishman. Instead of making him noisy and quarrelsome, it produced a tendency towards tranquillity —so much so, that Quashie, in less than five minutes after his last suck at the flask, coggled over upon the grass, and fell fast asleep.

So soundly slept he, that not only did he fail to hear the report of Smythje's gun, but the discharge of a whole battery of field-pieces close to his ear would not, at that moment, have awakened him.

It is scarce possible to say how long Quashie would have continued in this state of half-sleep, half-inebriety, had he been left undisturbed; nor was he restored to consciousness by human agency or living creature of any kind. That which brought him to

himself—waking and, at the same time, partially sobering him—was the rain; which, descending like a cold shower-bath on his semi-naked skin, caused him to start to his feet.

Quashie, however, had enjoyed more than an hour's sleep, before the rain began to fall; and this may account for the *eau de vie* having in some measure lost its influence when he awoke.

He was sensible that he had done wrong in drinking the buckra's brandy; and as the temporary courage with which it had inspired him was now quite gone, he dreaded an encounter with the white "gemman." He would have shunned it, had he known how; but he knew very well that to slink home by himself would bring down upon him the wrath of massa at Mount Welcome—pretty sure to be accompanied by a couple of dozen from the cartwhip.

After a while's reflection, he concluded that his most prudent plan would be to wait for the young buckra's return and tell him the best tale he could.

To say he had been searching for him, and that was how he had spent the time—was the

story that suggested itself to the troubled imagination of Quashie.

To account for the disappearance of the cognac—for he had drunk every drop of it—the darkey had bethought him of another little bit of fabrication—suggested, no doubt, by the mischance that had befallen the bottle of claret. He intended to tell the grand buckra—and "thrape" it down his throat if need be—that he, the buckra, had left out the stopper of the flask, and that the brandy had followed the example set by the "heel-tap" of wine.

Thus fortified with a plausible story, Quashie awaited the return of the sportsman.

The sky cleared after a time, but no buckra came; nor yet, after a considerable spell of fine weather had transpired, did he make his appearance.

Quashie became impatient, and slightly anxious. Perhaps the English "gemman" had lost himself in the woods; and if so, what would be done to him, the guide? Massa Vaughan would be sure to punish him. In fancy he could hear the crack of the cart-whip resounding afar off over the hills.

After waiting a while longer, he determined

to put an end to his anxiety, by going in search of the sportsman; and taking up the empty bag, along with the equally empty flask, and hunting-knife, he set forth.

He had seen Mr. Smythje go towards the glade, and so far he could follow his trail; but once arrived at the open ground, he was completely at fault.

He had not the slightest idea of what direction to take.

After pausing to reflect, he took the right—that which would conduct him to the dead-wood, which was visible from the point where he had entered the glade.

It was not altogether accident that conducted him thither; but rather that, in that direction, he heard, or fancied he heard, voices.

As he drew near to the decapitated tree, a glittering object on the ground caught his eye. He halted, thinking it might be a snake—a creature of which most plantation negroes have a wholesome dread.

On scrutinizing the object more closely, Quashie was surprised to perceive that the glittering object was a gun; and, on a still nearer acquaintance with it, he saw that it was the gun of the buckra sportsman!

It was lying upon the grass near the bottom of the dead-wood. What was it doing there?

Where was the buckra himself? Had some accident happened to him? Why had he abandoned his gun? Had he shot himself? Or had somebody else shot him?

Just at that moment the most lugubrious of sounds fell upon Quashie's ear. It was a groan, long-drawn and hollow—as if some tortured spirit was about taking its departure from the earth! It resembled the voice of a man, as of some one speaking from the interior of a tomb!

The darkey stood horrified—his black epidermis turning to an ashy-grey colour, quick as the change of a chameleon.

He would have taken to his heels, but a thought restrained him. It might be the buckra still alive, and in trouble? In that case he, Quashie, would be punished for deserting him.

The voice appeared to issue from behind the dead-wood. Whoever uttered it must be there. Perhaps the sportsman lay wounded upon the other side?

Quashie screwed up his courage as high as it would go, and commenced moving round to

the other side of the stump. He proceeded cautiously, step by step, scrutinizing the ground as he went.

He reached the other side. He looked all over the place. Nobody there—neither dead nor wounded!

There were no bushes to conceal an object so large as the body of a man—at least, not within twenty yards of the stump. The groan could not have come from a greater distance!

Nor yet could a man be hidden under the trellis of climbing plants that clung around the underwood. Quashie had still enough courage left to peep among them and see. There was nobody there!

At this moment, a second groan sounded in the darkey's ear, increasing his terror. It was just such a one as the first—long, protracted, and sepulchral, as if issuing from the bottom of a well.

Again it came from behind the stump; but this time from the side which he had just left, and where he had seen no one!

Had the wounded man crawled round to the other side, while he, Quashie, was proceeding in the opposite direction?

This was the thought that occurred to him;

and to determine the point, he passed back to the side whence he had come—this time going more rapidly, lest the mysterious moaner might again escape him.

On reaching the spot from which he had originally set out, he was more surprised than ever. Not a soul was to be seen. The gun still lay in its place as he had left it. No one appeared to have touched it—no one was there!

Again the voice—this time, however, in a shrill treble, and more resembling a shriek! It gave Quashie a fresh start; while the perspiration spurted out from his forehead, and ran down his cheeks like huge tears.

The shriek, however, was more human-like—more in the voice of a man; and this gave the darkey sufficient courage to stand his ground a little longer. He had no doubt but that the voice came from the other side of the dead-wood; and once more he essayed to get his eyes upon the utterer.

Still in the belief that the individual, whoever it was, and for whatever purpose, was dodging round the tree, Quashie now started forward with a determination not to stop till he had run the dodger to earth. For this pur-

pose he commenced circling around the stump, going first at a trot; but hearing now and then the groans and shrieks—and always on the opposite side—he increased his pace, until he ran with all the speed in his power.

He kept up this exercise, till he had made several turns around the tree; when, at length, he became convinced that no human being could be running before him without his seeing him.

The conviction brought him to an abrupt halt, followed by a quick reflection. If not a human being, it must be a "duppy, or de debbil hisself!"

The evidence that it was one or the other had now become overpowering. Quashie could resist it no longer.

"Duppy! Jumbé! de debbil!" cried he, as with chattering teeth, and eyeballs protruding from their sockets, he shot off from the stump, and "streaked it" in the direction of Mount Welcome, as fast as a pair of trembling limbs were capable of carrying him.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SCARCITY OF TROUSERS.

FOLLOWING his gigantic guide, Mr. Smythje trudged unhappily homeward.

How different his craven, crestfallen look, from the swell, swaggering sportsman of the morning! while the condition of his person was not more dilapidated than that of his spirit.

It was no longer the disgrace of returning with an empty game-bag, but the chagrin which he expected to have to undergo, presenting himself at Mount Welcome in the "pickle" in which his adventure had left him.

He was now even in a more ludicrous plight than when Quaco had extracted him from the hollow tree: for the rain, that had long since ceased, had been succeeded by a blazing hot sun, and the atmosphere acting upon what remained of his wet fawn-skin trousers, caused them to shrink until the ragged edges had crept up to mid-thigh; thus leaving a large

section of thin knock-kneed legs between them and the tops of his boots!

In truth, the sportsman had become the *beau ideal* of a "guy"; and, more than half conscious of this fact, he would at that moment have given the situation of bookkeeper on his estate to any individual who should have presented him with a pair of pantaloons.

His guide could do nothing for him. In the line of inexpressibles Quaco was no better provided than himself.

Verily, the prospect was appalling!

Could he reach the house, and steal to his own chamber unseen? What chance was there of his doing so?

On reflection, not much. Mount Welcome, like all other mansions in Jamaica, was a cage—open on every side. It was almost beyond the bounds of probability that he could enter the house unobserved.

Still, he could try, and on the success of that trial rested his only hope. Oh, for that grand secret known only to the jealous Juno—the secret of rendering one's-self invisible! What would Smythje not have given for a ten minutes' hire of that Carthaginian cloud?

The thought was really in his mind; for

Smythje, like all young Englishmen of good family, had studied the classics.

The idea, moreover, proved suggestive. If there was no probability of being provided with the nimbus of Juno, there was the possibility of shadowing himself under the nimbus of night. Darkness once on, he might enter the house, reach his chamber unperceived, and thus escape the unpleasant exposure he so much dreaded.

Smythje stopped, looked at his guide, looked at the sun, and lastly at his naked knees—now, from the enfeebled state of his limbs, oscillating towards each other.

Mount Welcome was in sight. The guide was about to leave him; and, therefore, in whatever way he might choose to act, there would be no witness.

Just then the Maroon made his adieus, and the *ci-devant* sportsman was left to himself.

Once more he scanned the sun, and consulted his watch. In two hours it would be twilight. The crepusculous interval would enable him to approach the house; and in the first moments of darkness—before the lamps were lit—he *might* enter unobserved—or, at

all events, his plight might not very plainly be perceived.

The scheme was feasible, and having determined to adopt it, Smythje cowered down in the covert, and awaited the setting of the sun.

He counted the hours, the half-hours, and minutes—he listened to the voices coming up from the negro village—he watched the bright-winged birds that fluttered among the branches over-head, and envied them their *complete* plumage.

Notwithstanding many rare sights and sweet sounds that reached him, the two hours spent in his secret lair were not passed pleasantly—solicitude about the success of his scheme robbing him of all zest for the enjoyment of that fair scene that surrounded him.

The hour of action drew nigh. The sun went down over the opposite ridge, where lay Montagu Castle, his own domain. The twilight, like a purple curtain, was gently drawn over the valley of Mount Welcome. It was time to start.

Smythje rose to his feet; and, after making

a *reconnoissance* of the ground before him, set off in the direction of the house.

He aimed at keeping as much as possible under cover of the woods; and this he was enabled to do—the pimento groves on that side stretching down to the shrubbery that surrounded the dwelling.

He had got past the negro village—keeping it upon his right—without being observed. To both the "quarter" and the sugar works he gave as wide a berth as the nature of the ground would permit.

He succeeded in reaching the platform on which the house stood—so far unperceived.

But the moment of peril was not yet past. The dangerous ground still lay before him, and had still to be traversed. This was the open *parterre* in front of the house: for it was to the front that the path had conducted him.

It was dusk; and no one appeared—at least he could see no one—either on the stair-landing or in the windows of the great hall. So far good.

A rush for the open doorway, and then on to his own chamber, where Thoms would soon clothe him in a more becoming costume.

He started to make the rush, and had succeeded in getting half-way across the *parterre*; when, all at once, a crowd of people, carrying large flaming torches above their heads, appeared, coming from the rear of the dwelling.

They were the domestics and some field hands of the plantation, with Trusty, the overseer, at their head.

One might have fancied that they were setting out upon some ceremonious procession; but their hurried advance, and the presence of Quashie trotting in the lead, proclaimed a different purpose.

Smythje divined their errand. They were going in search of himself!

The sight filled him with despair. The torch-bearers had anticipated him. They had already reached the front of the house, and the glare of their great flambeaux illuminated every object, as if a new sun had suddenly shot up athwart the sky!

There was no chance of successfully running the gauntlet under that bright flame: Smythje saw not the slightest.

He stopped in his tracks. He would have retreated back among the bushes, and there awaited the departure of the torch-bearers,

but he feared that his retrograde movement would attract their eyes upon him; and then all would be over—his adventure terminating in the most undesirable manner.

Instead of retreating, therefore, he stood where he had stopped—fixed and immobile, as if pinned to the spot.

At that moment two figures appeared on the top of the stairway—in the brilliant light easily recognizable as the planter and his daughter. The maid Yola was behind them. Mr. Vaughan had come out to give some directions about the search.

All three stood facing the crowd of torch-bearers, and, of course, fronting towards Smythje.

The planter was just opening his lips to speak, when a cry from the maid, echoed by her young mistress, interrupted him. The sharp eyes of the Foolah had fallen upon Smythje, whose wan, white face, shining under the light of the links, resembled those of the statues that were set over the *parterre*.

Smythje was among the shrubbery; and as the girl knew that no statue stood there, the unexpected apparition had elicited her cry of alarm.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the spot, while the torch-bearers, with Trusty at their head, hurried towards it.

There was no chance of escape. The unfortunate sportsman was discovered and brought broadly into the light, under the fierce battery of eyes—among others, the eyes of his lady-love, that, instead of expressing sympathy for his forlorn condition, appeared rather to sparkle with satirical delight!

It was a terrible catastrophe—to be contemplated in such a plight; and Smythje, hurrying through the crowd, lost no time in withdrawing from observation by betaking himself to his chamber; where, under the consolatory encouragement of the sympathizing Thoms, he was soon rendered presentable.

CHAPTER IX.

HERBERT IN THE HAPPY VALLEY.

INAPPROPRIATE as Jacob Jessuron's neighbours may have deemed the title of his estate—the Happy Valley—Herbert Vaughan had no reason to regard it as a misnomer. From the hour in which he entered upon his situation of book-keeper, it was a round of pleasures, rather than duties, that he found himself called upon to fulfil; and his new life, so far from being laboriously spent, was one continued scene, or series of scenes, of positive pastime.

Instead of keeping books, or looking after slaves—or, in short, doing anything that might be deemed useful—most of his time was spent in excursions, that had no other object than recreation or amusement. Drives to the Bay—in which he was accompanied by Jessuron himself, and introduced to his mercantile acquaintances; visits to neighbouring penns and plantations with the beautiful Judith—in which he was made acquainted

with her circle; fishing parties upon the water, and picnics in the woods: all these were afforded him without stint.

He was furnished with a fine horse to ride; dogs and equipments for the chase; everything, in short, calculated to afford him the life of a gentleman of elegant leisure. A half-year's salary had been advanced to him unasked—thus delicately giving him the means of replenishing his wardrobe, and enabling him to appear in proper costume for every occasion.

Certainly, the prospects of the poor steerage-passenger seemed to have undergone a change for the better. Through the generosity of his unexpected patron, he was playing a *rôle* at the Jew's penn not unlike that which his fellow-voyager was, at that very time, performing at Mount Welcome; and as there was not much difference in the social rank of the respective circles in which they were each revolving, it was by no means improbable that the two might meet again, and upon a more equal footing than formerly.

To do Herbert Vaughan justice, it should be stated that he was more surprised than gratified by the luxurious life he was leading. There was something rather extraordinary in

the generous patronage of the Jew—something that puzzled him not a little. How was he to account for such kind hospitality?

Thus for days after Herbert Vaughan had made the Happy Valley his home, matters moved on smoothly enough to the superficial observer. Slight incongruities that did occur from time to time, were ingeniously explained; and the young Englishman, unsuspicious of any evil design, with the exception of the unwonted hospitality that was being bestowed upon himself, saw nothing extraordinary in the circumstances that surrounded him.

Had he been less the honoured guest of his Israelitish host, perhaps his perceptions might have been more scrupulous and discriminative. But the Arabs have a proverb—"It is not in human nature to speak ill of the horse that has borne one out of danger;" and human nature in the East is but the counterpart of its homonym in the West. Noble as was the nature of the young Englishman, still was it human; and to have "spoken ill of the bridge that had carried him safely over"—and from that desolate shore on which he had late been

stranded—would have argued a nature something more than human.

If he entertained any suspicion of his patron's integrity, he zealously kept it to himself—not with any idea of surrendering either his independence or self-respect; but to await the developement of the somewhat inexplicable courtesy of which he was the recipient.

This courtesy was not confined to his Hebrew host. As Herbert had long been aware, his daughter exercised it in an equal degree, and far more gracefully. Indeed, among other transformations that had been remarked as occurring in the Happy Valley, the spirit of the fair Jewess seemed also to have sustained a remarkable change. Though upon occasions the proud, imperious temper would manifest itself, more generally now was Judith in a sentimental vein—at times approaching to sadness. There were other times when the old spitefulness would show itself. Then the spiral nostrils would curl with contempt, and the dark Israelitish eyes flash with malignant fire.

Happily, these rather ungraceful exhibitions—like the tornadoes of her native land—

were rare: for a certain name—the cause that called them forth—was but rarely pronounced in her hearing. Kate Vaughan was the name.

Judith's dislike for the young creole had originated in a mere rivalry of charms. Both enjoyed a wide-spread reputation for beauty—oft descanted upon, and often compared, by the idle gallants of the Bay. These discussions and comparisons reached the ears of the Jewess; and, to her chagrin, the decisions were not always in her favour. Hence the origin of her enmity.

Hitherto it had been only *envy*; and, with a toss of the head, and a slight curl of the nostril, the unpleasant theme would be dismissed. Of late, however, a stronger emotion than envy had begun to exhibit itself; and, whenever the name of Kate Vaughan was introduced into the conversation—no matter how incidentally or undesigned—the eye of the Jewess would light up with a jealous fire, her lip quiver as if muttering curses, and she, who but the moment before seemed a very angel, would become all at once transformed into the semblance of a demon!

The behaviour of the Jewess admits of easy

explanation. *She was in love, and with Herbert Vaughan.*

At first the motive had been part vanity, part coquetry—blended, however, with some serious admiration. Mingled also with this was a desire to vex Kate Vaughan: for, from the first, she had suspected rivalry in that quarter. Even though she had been made aware of the very short interview between the cousins, she could not feel satisfied but that something had passed between them; and there was that bit of ribbon, which Herbert still cherished, and of the symbolism of which she had vainly endeavoured to obtain a solution.

Her suspicions did not die out, as it might be supposed they would, in the absence of any demonstration on Herbert's part towards his cousin. On the contrary, they only grew stronger as her own interest in the young Englishman increased, for then she could not understand how a young girl—Kate Vaughan, or any other—could have looked upon the man who had impressed her, without being herself impressed.

And she had become impressed by him, not gradually, but rapidly and profoundly; until her love had grown into a fierce passion—such

as a tigress might be suspected of conceiving for her tawny mate.

Herbert Vaughan had passed scarce a week under the roof of the Jew's mansion when its mistress was in love with him—to the ends of her fingers—to the very extreme of jealousy!

As for the object of this fervent passion, the young man was at this time altogether unable to analyze his own feelings.

It is true that the imperious spirit of the Jewess, aided by her endless wiles, had gained a certain ascendancy over him; but not so as to obliterate the image that had recently become impressed upon his heart.

In the short interview which he had had with his cousin Kate, Herbert Vaughan had looked, for the first time in his life, on one whom to look at was to love. The blue-eyed belle of his native village, the pretty barmaid at the inn, the sweet-faced chorister in the church—with other boyish fancies, already half obliterated by two months of absence—were swept instantaneously into the dustbin of oblivion by that lovely apparition. He was face to face with a woman worthy of his love

—one who deserved every aspiration of his soul. Intuitively and at the first glance he had felt this; and still more was he impressed with it, as he pronounced those warm words on his painful parting. Hence the ardent proffer of the strong arm and the stout heart —hence the chivalric refusal of the purse, and the preference of a piece of ribbon.

Not that he had any reason to regard the latter as a love-token. He knew that the kind words that had been spoken in that short but stormy interview—as well as the offer of gold that had ended it—were but the promptings of a pitying heart; and rather a negation of love, than a sign of its existence. Glad as he might have been to have regarded the piece of ribbon as a *gage d'amour*, he could only prize it as a *souvenir* of friendship—of no higher signification than the purse to which it had belonged, or the gold treasure which that purse had contained.

Though sensible that he had no claim upon his cousin beyond that of kinship—though not a word had been spoken by her to show that she felt for him any other kind of regard, Herbert, strange enough, had conceived

a hope, that some day or other, a more endearing relationship might exist between them.

Not for long was he cheered by this sweet expectancy. It was too transitory to stand the test of time. As day succeeded day, rumours reached him of the gay scenes that were transpiring at Mount Welcome. Especially was he informed of the contentedness of his cousin Kate in the society of the new companion which her father had provided for her.

The effect of this information was a gradual but grievous extinction of the slight hope which Herbert had conceived.

The circumstances with which chance had now surrounded him may have rendered these regrets less painful. Though his cousin cared not for him, he had no reason to feel forsaken or forlorn. By his side—and almost constantly by his side—was beauty of no common brilliance, showering smiles upon him of no ordinary attractiveness.

Had he been the recipient of those smiles only one day sooner—before the image of Kate Vaughan had made that slight impression upon his heart—he might the more

readily have yielded to their influence. And, perhaps, on the other hand, could he have known how *his* image had fallen upon her heart, and made lodgment there, he might have offered a sterner resistance to the syren seductions with which he was now beset.

But lovers' hearts are not things of glass; and though at times they resemble mirrors, mentally reflecting each other, too often, by the ruling of contrarieties, do the mirrors become reversed and with the reflecting images facing darkly inward.

In such a dilemma was the heart of Herbert Vaughan. No wonder he found a difficulty in effecting its analysis!

In a condition somewhat similar to Herbert's was the heart of his cousin: though hers was easier to analyse. It was simply trembling under the influence of a first and virgin love. Two forms had been presented to it in the same hour, both in the blush of youthful manhood—one, a distinguished gentleman, the other, an humble adventurer.

The former had the additional advantage in priority of introduction; the latter was not even introduced. But the favourite does not

always win. The earliest on the course may be the latest in the race; and though the heart of the young creole, on its pure virgin page, had received love's image at first sight, it was not that of him who first presented himself to make the impression.

Nor was she kept in ignorance of outward events. Her maid Yola was the medium by which she was acquainted with them. Through this medium she had heard of Herbert's proximity—of his happiness and prosperity. The news would have given her joy, but that she had heard he was *too happy*. Strange that this should be a cause of bitterness!

The thoughts that succeeded—the hopes and fears—the dark doubts by day and by night—the dreams, often delusively bright—need not be detailed. There are none who have not known a first love; few who have not felt this chequered alternation of emotions.

As for the distinguished Smythje, he was not always in one mind. He, too, was troubled with an alternation of hopes and fears. The former, however, generally predominated;

and, for the most part, he felt in his spirit the proud confidence of a conqueror. Often, with Thoms as his audience, might Smythje be heard exultingly repeating the despatch of Cæsar:—"*Veni, vidi, vici!*"

CHAPTER X.

IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE.

THE mutual spite between planter and penn-keeper was of old standing—dating, in fact, from their first acquaintance with each other. Some sharp practice between them, in the sale and purchase of slaves, had given origin to it; and circumstances were always occurring to hinder it from dying out. This was more especially the case since the Jew, by the purchase of the Happy Valley estate, had become the contiguous neighbour—and, in point of wealth, almost the rival—of the proprietor of Mount Welcome.

On the side of the Custos there had been for some time past another feeling mixed up with his antipathy to his Israelitish neighbour—a vague sense of fear. This was of modern origin—dating from a period subsequent to the execution of Chakra, the myal-man—and begotten of some remarks which, as reported to Mr. Vaughan, the Jew had made in connection with that ugly incident.

If nothing had of late transpired to increase this fear on the part of the Custos, a circumstance had arisen to strengthen his hostility. The protection which had been given to his discarded nephew, and the parade which his neighbour was making of him, had proved to the Custos a scandal of the most irksome kind; and almost every day was he made aware of some unpleasant bit of gossip connected with the affair. So irritated had he become with rumours, constantly reaching him, that his hatred for the Jew had grown stronger than ever before; and he would have given a dozen hogsheads of his best *muscovado* to any one who would have provided him with the means of humiliating the detested penn-keeper.

Just at this crisis, chance or fortune stepped in to favour him, apparently offering the very opportunity he desired; and in a way that, instead of costing him a dozen hogsheads of sugar, was likely to put far more than that amount of property into his pocket.

It was the day before that on which Smythje had dropped into the dead-wood. The Custos was in his kiosk alone, smoking a plantation cigar, and conning over the statutes

of the "black code"—a favourite study with him. Just at that moment Mr. Trusty's shadow was projected into the summer-house.

"Well, Trusty, what is it?"

"There's a man below wants to see your worship."

"On what business, pray?"

"Don't know," answered the laconic overseer; "he won't tell. Says it's important, and can only communicate to yourself."

"What sort of a man is he? Negro or white?"

"Neither, your worship. He's a clear mulatto. I've seen him about before. He's one of the Maroons that have their settlement over among the Trelawney Hills. He calls himself Cubina."

"Ah!" said the Custos, showing a slight emotion as the name was pronounced; "Cubina! Cubina! I've heard the name. I fancy I've seen the man—at a distance. A young fellow, isn't he?"

"Very young; though they say he's the captain of the Trelawney band."

"What on earth can the Maroon want with me?" muttered Mr. Vaughan, half to himself. "He hasn't brought in any runaways, has he?"

"No," answered the overseer. "Thanks to your worship's good management, we haven't any of late—not since that old schemer Chakra was put out of the way."

"Thanks to *your* good management, Mr. Trusty," said the planter, returning his overseer's compliment, not without a show of nervous uneasiness, which the reference to Chakra had called forth. "Then it's nothing of that kind, you think?" he hastily added, as if desirous of changing the theme.

"No, your worship. It cannot be: there's not a runaway upon my list;" replied Trusty, with an air of triumph.

"Gad! I'm glad to hear it," said the Custos, rubbing his hands together as an expression of his contentment. "Well; I suppose the young fellow has come to consult me in my magisterial capacity. In some scrape, no doubt? These Maroons are always getting themselves into trouble with our planters. I wonder who he's come to complain about?"

"Well, that much I think I can tell you," rejoined the overseer, evidently knowing more of the Maroon's errand than he had yet admitted—for Mr. Trusty was a true disciple of the secretive school. "If I should be allowed

to make a guess, your worship, I should say it is something relating to our neighbour of the Happy Valley."

"What! the Jew?"

"Jacob Jessuron, Esquire."

"You think so, Trusty?" inquired Mr. Vaughan, with an earnest and gratified look. "Has the young fellow said anything?"

"No," answered the overseer; "it's not anything *he* has said. I heard something a day or two ago about a runaway the Maroons have got among them—a slave belonging to the Jew. It appears they don't want to give him up."

"Whom did you hear it from?"

"Why, not exactly from any one, your worship. I should rather say I *overheard* it, quite by accident. One of the Trelawney Maroons—a big fellow that comes down here occasionally after Black Bet—was telling her something. I was passing Bet's cabin, and heard him talking about this runaway."

"Don't want to give him up! And for what reason do they refuse?"

"Can't tell, your worship. I could only make out part of the conversation."

"So you think it's about that the young fellow has come?"

"I think it likely, your worship. He's close, however, and I couldn't get a word out of him about his business. He says he must see you."

"All right, then! You can show him in here. And hark ye, Mr. Trusty! See Black Bet, and get what you can out of her. This is an interesting matter. A Maroon refusing to deliver up a runaway! There must be something in it. Perhaps the mulatto will tell me all about it; but whether he does or not, you may see Bet. You can promise her a new gown, or whatever you like. Show the young fellow up at once. I am ready to receive him."

Mr. Trusty bowed, and walked off in the direction of the works, where the Maroon had remained in waiting; while the Custos, composing himself into an official attitude, awaited the approach of his visitor.

"I'd give a good round sum," soliloquized he, "to learn that the old rascal has got into some scrape with these Maroon fellows. I shouldn't wonder," he added, in gleeful anticipation, "I shouldn't wonder! I know they

don't much like him—less since he's taken the Spaniards into his pay—and I suspect he's been engaged in some underhand transactions of late. He's been growing grander every day, and nobody knows where all the money comes from. Maybe Master Maroon has a tale to tell; and, if it's against Jessuron, I'll take care he has an opportunity of telling it. Ah, here he comes! Egad, a fine-looking fellow! So, so! This is the young man that my daughter jokes Yola about! Well, I don't wonder the Foolah should have taken a fancy to him; but I must see that he doesn't make a fool of her. These Maroons are dangerous dogs among the women of the plantations; and Yola, whether a princess or not in her own country——princess, ha! ha! Well, at all events the wench is no common nigger; and it won't do for Master Maroon to be humbugging her. I shall lecture him about it, now that I've got him here."

By this time the Maroon captain—equipped just as we have seen him in the forest—had arrived in front of the kiosk; and, making a deferential bow, though without taking off his hat—which, being the *toqued kerchief*, could not

conveniently be removed—stood waiting for the Custos to address him.

The planter remained for a considerable time without vouchsafing further speech than the mechanical salutation, "Good morning."

There was something in the physiognomy of his visitor that had evidently made an unpleasant impression upon him; and the gaze, with which he regarded the latter, was one which bespoke some feeling different from that of mere curiosity or admiration.

Whatever the feeling was, he seemed desirous of suppressing it; and, making an effort to that effect, appeared to succeed: for the shadow, that for an instant had shown itself on his countenance, cleared away; and, with a magisterial but courteous smile, he commenced the conversation.

CHAPTER XI.

MAGISTRATE AND MAROON.

"WELL, young man," continued the Custos, in an affable tone, "you, I believe, are one of the Maroons of Trelawney?"

"Yes, worship," bluntly rejoined Cubina.

"The captain of a town, are you not?"

"Only a few families, worship. Ours is a small settlement."

"And your name is——?"

"Cubina."

"Ah! I've heard the name," said the Custos. "I think," added he, with a significant smile, "we have a young girl here on the plantation who knows you?"

Cubina blushed, as he stammered out an affirmative.

"Oh! that's all right," said the planter, encouragingly. "So long as there's no harm meant, there's no harm done. Mr. Trusty tells me you have business with me. Is it about that?"

"About what, your worship?" inquired the Maroon, a little taken by surprise at the question so unexpectedly put to him.

"About your sweetheart!"

"My sweetheart, worship?"

"Ay, Yola. Is she not your sweetheart?"

"Well, Mr. Vaughan," rejoined the Maroon, "I'm not going to deny that something has passed between me and the young girl; but it wasn't exactly about her I've come to see you, though now, bein' here, I might as well talk about that matter, too, if it so please your worship."

"Very good, Captain Cubina. I'm ready to hear what you have to say. Go on!"

"Well, then, your worship, the truth is, I want to buy Yola."

"What? Buy your own sweetheart?"

"Just so, worship. Of course, as soon as she would be mine, I'd set her free."

"That is, you would change the bonds she now wears for the bonds of matrimony?—ha! ha! ha! Is that it, Captain Cubina?" and the Custos laughed at the conceit he had so neatly expressed.

"Something of that sort, your worship,"

replied the Maroon, slightly participating in the worthy magistrate's mirth.

"And do you think Yola desires to become Mrs. Cubina?"

"If I didn't think so, your worship, I wouldn't propose to buy her. It would be nothing to me to own the girl, if she wasn't agreeable."

"She *is* agreeable, then?"

"Well, worship, I think so. Not that she don't like the young mistress that owns her at present; but, you see, your worship—but ——"

"But there's somebody she likes better than her mistress; and that's yourself, Master Cubina?"

"Well, you see, worship, that's a different sort of liking, and——"

"True enough—true enough!" interrupted Mr. Vaughan, as if wishing to come to the end of the conversation—at least, upon that particular topic.

"Well, Captain Cubina," he added, "suppose I was willing to part with Yola, how much could you afford to give for her? Mind you, I don't say I am willing: for, after all, the girl belongs to my daughter; and *she*

would have something to say in the matter."

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Cubina, in a tone of tender confidence, "Miss Vaughan is good and generous. I've often heard say so. I am sure she would never stand in the way of Yola's being happy."

"Oh, you think it would make Yola happy, do you?"

"I hope so, your worship," answered the Maroon, modestly dropping his eyelids as he made the reply.

"After all," said the planter, "it would be a matter of business. My daughter, even if she wished it, could not afford to part with the girl for less than the market price; which in Yola's case would be a large one. How much do you suppose I have been offered for her?"

"I've heard two hundred pounds, your worship."

"Just so; and I refused that, too."

"Maybe, Mr. Vaughan, you would not have refused it from another—from me, for instance?"

"Ah, I don't know about that! But could *you* raise that large sum?"

"Not just now, your worship. I am sorry

to say I could not. I had scraped together as good as a hundred—thinking that would be enough—when, to my sorrow, I learnt I had only got half way. But, if your worship will only allow me time, I think I can manage—in a month or two—to get the other hundred, and then——"

"Then, worthy captain, it will be time to talk about buying Yola. Meanwhile, I can promise you that she shan't be sold to anybody else. Will that satisfy you?"

"Oh, thank your worship! It is very kind of you, Mr. Vaughan: I'll not fail to be grateful. So long as Yola——"

"Yola will be safe enough in my daughter's keeping. But now, my young fellow, since you say this was not exactly the business that brought you here, you have some other, I suppose? Pray tell me what it is."

The Custos, as he made this request, set himself to listen, in a more attentive attitude than he had yet assumed.

"Well, your worship!" proceeded Cubina, "I've come over to ask you for some advice about a matter I have with Mr. Jessuron—he as keeps penn close by here."

Mr. Vaughan became doubly attentive.

"What matter?" asked he, in a simple phrase—lest any circumlocution might distract the speaker from his voluntary declaration.

"It's an ugly business, your worship; and I wouldn't bother about it, but that the poor young fellow who's been robbed out of his rights, turns out to be neyther more nor less than the brother of Yola herself. It's a queer story altogether; and if it wasn't the old Jew that's done the thing, one could hardly believe it."

"What thing? Pray be explicit, my friend."

"Well, your worship, if you'll have patience to hear me, I'll tell you the whole story from beginning to end—that is, as far as it has gone: for it ain't ended yet."

"Go on!" commanded the Custos. "I'll hear it patiently. And don't be afraid, Captain Cubina," added he, encouragingly. "Tell me all you know—every circumstance. If it's a case for justice, I promise you justice shall be done."

And with this magisterial commonplace, the Custos resumed his attitude of extreme attention.

"I'll make no secrets, your worship, whether it gets me into trouble or no. I'll tell you all—leastwise, all that's come to my knowledge."

And with this proviso, the Maroon captain proceeded to detail the circumstances connected with the capture of the runaway; the singular encounter between brother and sister; and the mutual recognition that followed. Then afterwards the disclosures made by the young man: how he was an African prince; how he had been sent in search of his sister; the ransom he had brought with him; his landing from the ship, consigned by Captain Jowler to the care of Jessuron; his treatment and betrayal by the Jew; the branding of his person, and robbing him of his property; his escape from the penn; his capture by Cubina, already described; and, finally, his detention by the latter, in spite of several messages and menaces, sent by the Jew, to deliver him up.

"Good!" cried Loftus Vaughan, starting from his chair, and evidently delighted by the recital, somewhat dramatically delivered by the Maroon. "A melodrama, I declare! wanting only one act to complete it. Egad, I shall feel inclined to be one of the actors

before it's played out. Ho!" exclaimed he, as if some thought had suddenly struck him; "this may explain why the old rascal wanted to buy the wench—though I don't clearly see his purpose in that. It'll come clear yet, no doubt."

Then addressing himself once more to the Maroon:—

"Twenty-four Mandingoes, you say—twenty-four belonged to the prince?"

"Yes, your worship. Twenty regular slaves, and four others that were his personal attendants. There were more of the slaves; but these were the lawful property of the captain, the price paid for bringing him over."

"And they were all carried to the Jew's penn?"

"All of them, with the others: the whole cargo was taken there. The Jew bought all. There were some Coromantees among them; and one of my men, Quaco, who had talk with these, heard enough to confirm the young man's story."

"Ha! what a pity, now, that black tongues can't wag to any purpose! *Their* talk goes for nothing. But I'll see what may be done without it."

"Did your prince ascertain the name of the captain that brought him over?" inquired the magistrate, after considering a minute.

"Oh yes, your worship; Jowler, he was called. He trades upon the Gambia, where the prince's father lives. The young man knows him well."

"I think I know something of him, too—that same Jowler. I should like to lay my hands upon him, for something else than this—a precious scamp! After all, it wouldn't help our case if we had him. No doubt, the two set their heads together in the business, and there's only one story between them.

"Humph! what are we to do for a *white* witness?" continued the magistrate, speaking rather to himself than his visitor. "That, I fear, will be a fatal difficulty. Stay! Ravener, you say, Jessuron's overseer, was at the landing of the cargo?"

"Oh, yes, your worship. That individual took an active part in the whole transaction. It was he who stripped the prince of his clothes, and took all his jewellery away from him."

"Jewellery, too?"

"*Crambo*, yes! He had many valuable

things. Jowler kept most of his plunder aboard ship."

"A robbery! Egad, a wholesale robbery!"

"Well, Captain Cubina," proceeded the Custos, changing his tone to one of more business-like import, "I promise you that this shall not be passed over. I don't yet clearly see what course we may have to take. There are many difficulties in a prosecution of this kind. We'll have trouble about the testimony —especially since Mr. Jessuron is a magistrate himself. Never mind about that. Justice shall be done, even were he the highest in the land. But there can be no move made just yet. It will be a month before the assize court meets at Savannah; and that is where we must go with it. Meanwhile, not a word to any one—not a whisper of what you know!"

"I promise that, your worship."

"You must keep the Foolah prince where you have him. Don't on any account deliver him up. I'll see that you're protected in holding him. Considering the case, it's not likely the Jew will go to extremities with you. *He* has a glass house over his head, and will 'ware to throw stones—so you've not much to fear.

"And now, young man!" added the Custos, changing his tone to one that showed how friendly he could be to him who had imparted such gratifying intelligence, "if all goes well, you'll not have much difficulty in making up the hundred pounds for the purchase of your sweetheart. *Remember that!*"

"Thanks, worthy Custos," said Cubina, bowing gratefully; "I shall depend upon your promise."

"You may. And now—go quietly home, and wait till I send for you. I shall see my lawyer to-morrow. We may want you soon."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SMYTHJE ECLIPSE.

THE celebrated eclipse of Columbus, by which that shrewd navigator so advantageously deluded the simple savages of Don Christopher's Cove, is not the only one for which the island of Jamaica *should* be famous. It is my duty to introduce another: which, if not worthy of being recorded upon the page of history, deserves at least a chapter in our romance.

The eclipse in question, though not so important in its results as that which favoured the great world-finder, was nevertheless of considerable interest—more especially to some of the *dramatis personæ* of our tale, whose fortunes it influenced in no slight degree.

Occurring about two weeks after the arrival of the distinguished Smythje, it seemed as if the sun had specially extinguished himself for the occasion: as a sort of appropriate climax to the round of brilliant *fêtes* and entertainments, of which the lord of Montagu Castle had been

the recipient. It deserves, therefore, to be designated the "Smythje eclipse."

On the day before that on which the obscuration of the sun was expected to take place, the Cockney had conceived a brilliant design—that of viewing the eclipse from the top of the mountain—from the summit of the Jumbé Rock!

There was something daringly original in this design; and for that had Smythje adopted it. Kate Vaughan was to be his companion. He had asked, and of course obtained, Mr. Vaughan's consent, and hers also of course—for Kate had found of late, more than ever, that her father's will was to be her law.

Smythje was not without a purpose in the proposed ascent to the natural observatory of the Jumbé Rock. In that hour when all the earth would be in *chiaro-oscuro*—as if shrouded under the pall of infinity—in that dark and solemn hour, Smythje had determined upon *popping the question!*

Why he had selected such a place and time—both pre-eminently sombre—must for ever remain a mystery. He may have been under an impression that the poetical reputation of the place, combined with the romantic

solemnity of the scene and the hour, might exercise a dissolving influence over the heart of the young creole, and incline her to an affirmative answer. Or, perhaps, *au fait* as he was to theatrical contrivances, he may have drawn his idea from something he had seen upon the stage, and chosen his climax accordingly.

Some two hours before the expected contact between the limbs of the two great luminaries—in time to allow of leisurely walking—Smythje started out for the Jumbé Rock, of course accompanied by Kate Vaughan.

Attendants there were none; for the exquisite, on such an occasion, preferred being alone; and had so signified—declining the sable escort which his host had provided.

The morning was one of the fairest. The sun was still shining brightly. Not a speck could be distinguished upon the azure arch of a West-Indian sky; and the scenes through which the path conducted Mr. Smythje and his fair companion were among the loveliest to be found in the domain of Nature.

Around the dwelling of Mount Welcome—in its gardens and *parterres*—the eye delighted to dwell upon a variety of vegetable forms,

both indigenous and exotic—some planted for shade; some for the beauty of their blossoms; and others for their fruit. There could be seen the genip, the tamarind of Oriental fame, palms of several species, the native pawpaw, and the curious trumpet-tree. Distinguished for their floral beauties, were the cordia, the oleander, and South-Sea rose, the grand magnolia, and the perfumed Persian lilac. Bearing luscious fruits, were the cashew, the mango, and Malay apple; the sop, the guava, with every variety of the citron tribe—as oranges, lemons, limes, and the huge shaddock.

Climbing the standard trunks, and twining around the branches, were parasites of many species—rare and beautiful flowering plants: as the wax-like *hoya carnosa*, the crimson quamoclit, *barsavolas*, *ipomeas*, and other magnificent orchids.

It was a scene to stir the soul of a botanist to enthusiastic admiration; resembling a vast botanical garden—some grand house of palms, having for its roof the azure canopy of heaven.

To the eyes of the young creole—all her life accustomed to look upon those fair vegetable forms—there was nothing in the sight of them to beget astonishment; and the Cock-

ney cared but little for trees. His late adventure had cured him of all inclination for a forest life; and, in his eyes, a cabbage-palm was of no more interest than a cabbage.

Smythje, however, was not unmusical. Constant attendance at the opera had, to some extent, attuned his soul to song; and he could not help expressing some surprise at the melody of the Western songsters—so much misrepresented and maligned.

In truth, upon that morning they appeared to be giving one of their grandest concerts. In the garden groves could be heard the clear voice of the banana-bird, like the tones of a clarionet, mingled with the warbling tones of the blue quit. There, too, could be seen the tiny vervain humming-bird, seated upon the summit of a tall mango-tree, trilling out its attenuated and fairy-like lay, with as much enthusiastic energy as if its little soul was poured forth in the song.

In the dark mountain woods could be heard other songsters—the glass-eye merle singing his rich and long-continued strain; and, at intervals, the wild, plaintive cry of the solitaire, uttered in sweet but solemn notes, like the cadenced chaunting of a psalm—in perfect

keeping with the solitude which this singular songster affects.

Above all could be distinguished the powerful voice of the New World nightingale—the far-famed mock-bird—excelling all the other music of the groves; except when at intervals the rare May-bird condescended to fling his melody upon the breeze, when the mock-bird himself would instantly interrupt his lay, and become a listener.

Add to these sounds the humming of bees, the continuous "skirling" of grasshoppers, lizards, and cicadas—the metallic cluckling of tree-fogs, the rustling of the breeze among the lanceolate leaves of the tall bamboos, and the sighing of a cascade among the distant hills—add these, and you may have some idea of the commingling of sounds that saluted the ear of Mr. Montagu Smythje, as, with his fair companion, he ascended the mountain slope.

Cheerful as were the birds and brisk the bees, Smythje appeared cheerful and brisk as they. He was gay both in spirits and costume. Thoms had equipped him in one of his favourite suits; and his spirits were elevated by the prospect of his grand love triumph.

On arriving at the bottom of the ravine which conducted to the summit of the rock, Smythje showed his courage by boldly advancing to scale the steep path. He would have offered a hand to assist his companion; but in the difficult ascent he found full occupation for both; and in this ungallant manner was he compelled to climb upward.

Kate, however—who was accustomed to the path, and could possibly have given him assistance—found no difficulty in following; and in a few seconds both had arrived on the summit of the rock, and stood under the shadow of the palm.

The skeleton form, once chained to the tree, was no longer there to fray them. It had been mysteriously removed.

Mr. Smythje consulted his repeater. They had arrived just in the nick of time. In five minutes the eclipse would commence; and the discs of the two great heavenly orbs would appear in contact.

It was not this crisis, however, that Smythje had chosen for the cue to his important speech. Nor yet the moment of deepest darkness; but just when the sun should begin to re-appear, and, by his renewed brightening,

symbolize the state of the lover's own feelings.

He had prepared some pretty speeches which he meant to repeat by way of ushering in the declaration: how his own heart might be compared to the sun—now burning with passion—now darkened by deep despair; then once more brightening up, with rekindled hope, at the prospect of Kate making him the happiest of mortals.

He had prepared them pit-a-pat the night before, and gone over them with Thoms in the morning. He had rehearsed them more than a dozen times—ending with a dress rehearsal just before starting out.

Unless the eclipse should in some way deprive him of the use of his tongue, there could be no danger of his breaking down.

With perfect confidence, therefore, in his speech-making, and equally confident of the issue, the romantic Smythje restored his repeater to its fob; and, with sun-glass in hand, awaited the coming on of the eclipse.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSAL POSTPONED.

SLOWLY, silently, and still unseen, stole the soft luminary of night towards her burning god—till a slight shadow on his lower limb betokened the contact.

"The ekwipse is commencing," said Smythje, holding the glass to his eye. "The sun and moon are just kissing, like two lovers. How pwetty it is! Dawn't yaw think so, fayaw Kate?"

"Rather a distant kiss for lovers, I should say—some ninety odd millions of miles between them!"

"Haw, haw! veway good, veway good indeed! And in that sawt of thing, distance dawn't lend enchantment to the view. Much bettaw to be near, just as yaw and I are at this moment. Dawn't yaw think so, fayaw Kate?"

"That depends upon circumstances—whether the love be reciprocal."

"Wecipwocal!—yas, twoo enough—thaw is something in that."

"A great deal, I should think, Mr. Smythje. For instance, were I a man, and my sweetheart was frowning on me—as yonder moon seems to be upon his majesty the sun—I should keep my distance, though it were ninety millions of miles."

Had Mr. Smythje at that moment only removed the glass from his eye, and turned towards *his* sweetheart, he might have read in her looks that the speech just made possessed a significance, altogether different from the interpretation which it pleased him to put upon it.

"Haw, haw! veway pwetty of yaw, 'pon honaw! But yaw must wemember that yondaw moon has two faces. In that she wesembles the queetyaw called woman. Her bwight face is turned towards the sun, and no doubt she is at this moment smiling upawn the fellaw. Her frowns, yaw see, are faw us, and all the west of mankind; thawfo' she wesembles a devoted queetyaw. Dawn't yaw think so, fayaw Kate?"

Kate was compelled to smile, and for a short moment regarded Smythje with a glance which

might have been mistaken for admiration. In the analogy which the exquisite had drawn there was a scintillation of intellect—the more striking that it was not expected from such a source. Withal, the glance was rather indicative of surprise than admiration, though Smythje evidently interpreted it for the latter—his self-esteem assisting him to the interpretation.

Before she could make reply, he repeated the interrogatory.

"Oh, yes!" answered she, the smile disappearing from her countenance; "I can well imagine, Mr. Smythje, that your simile is just. I should think that a woman who loves devotedly, would not bestow her smiles on any other than him she loves; and though he were distant as yonder sun, in her heart she would smile on him all the same."

The young creole as she spoke lowered her eyes, no longer regarding the eclipse, but as if involuntarily directing her glance downward.

"Ah, yes!" continued she in thought, "and even if alike impossible for them ever to meet, still would her smiles be his! Ah, yes!"

For some seconds she remained silent and abstracted. Smythje, attracted by the altered

tone of her voice, had taken the telescope from his eye, and turned towards her.

Observing this abstracted air, which he had often before remarked, he did not think of attributing it to any other cause than that which his vanity had already divined. Kate Vaughan was in love; and with whom but himself?

His sympathetic soul was ready to give way; and he was almost on the point of departing from the programme which he had so ingeniously traced out. But the remembrance of the pretty speeches he had rehearsed with Thoms—and the thought that any deviation from the original design would deprive him of the pleasure of witnessing the effects which they must undoubtedly produce—restrained him from a premature declaration, and he remained silent.

It did not hinder him from some unspoken reflections.

"Poor queetyaw! evidently suffwing! Neithaw distance nor absence can make the slightest impwession upon her love—not the slightest. Ba Jawve! I feel more than half-inclined to bweak the spell, and reweive her fwom her miseway. But no—it would nevaw do. I must wesist the temptation. A little more

suffwing can do no harm, since the situation of the queetyaw wesembles the pwoverb: 'The darkest hour is that which is neawest the day.' Haw! haw!"

And with this fanciful similitude before his mind, the sympathetic and self-denying lover concluded his string of complacent reflections; and returning the glass to his eye, once more occupied himself in ogling the eclipse.

The young creole, seeing him thus engaged, withdrew to one side; and placing herself on the very edge of the cliff, stood gazing outward and downward. It was evident that the grand celestial phenomenon had no attraction for her. She cared neither to look upon the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars that would soon be visible in the fast-darkening sky. Her eyes, like her thoughts, were turned upon the earth; and as the penumbra began to cast its purple shadow over the fair face of Nature, so could a cloud be seen overspreading her beautiful countenance.

There was now deep silence below and around. In a few seconds of time a complete change had taken place. The uttering of the forest was no longer heard. The birds had suddenly ceased their songs, and if their voices

came up at intervals, it was in screams and cries that denoted fear. Insects and reptiles had become silent, under the influence of a like alarm. The more melancholy sounds alone continued —the sighing of the trees, and the sough of the distant waterfall. This transformation reminded Kate Vaughan of the change which had taken place in her own heart. Almost equally rapid had it been—the result of only a few days, or perhaps only hours: for the once gay girl had become, of late, habitually grave and taciturn. Well might she compare her thoughts to the forest sounds! The cheerful and musical were gone—those that were melancholy alone remained!

For this change there was a cause, not very different from that which Smythje had divined. He was right in assigning it to that passion—the most powerful that can dwell in a woman's heart.

Only as to its object did Mr. Smythje labour under a misconception. His self-conceit had guided him to a very erroneous conjecture. Could he have divined the thoughts at that moment passing in the mind of his companion, it would have completely cured him of the

conceit that he was the maker of that melancholy.

The mansion of Mount Welcome was in sight, gaily glittering amidst gorgeous groves. It was not upon it that the eyes of Kate Vaughan were bent; but upon a sombre pile, shadowed by great cotton trees, that lay in the adjoining valley. Her heart was with her eyes.

"Happy Valley!" soliloquized she, her thoughts occasionally escaping in low murmur from her lips. "Happy for *him*, no doubt! There has he found a welcome and a home denied him by those whose duty it was to have offered both. There has he found hospitality among strangers; and there, too——"

The young girl paused, as if unwilling to give words to the thought that had shaped itself in her mind.

"No," continued she, unable to avoid the painful reflection; "I need not shut my eyes upon the truth. It is true what I have been told—very true, I am sure. There has he found one to whom he has given his heart!"

A sigh of deep anguish succeeded the thought.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, resuming the sad soliloquy; "he promised me a strong arm and a stout heart, if I should ever need them. Ah, me! promise now bitter to be remembered —no longer possible to be kept! And the ribbon he was to prize so highly—which gave me such joy as he said it. Only another promise broken! Poor little souvenir! no doubt, long ere this, cast aside and forgotten! ah, me!"

Again the sigh interrupted the soliloquy. After a time it proceeded:—

"'We may never meet more!' These were almost his last words. Alas! too prophetic! Better, now,' we never should. Better this than to meet him—with her by his side—Judith Jessuron—his wife—his wife—oh!"

The last exclamation was uttered aloud, and with an undisguised accent of anguish.

Smythje heard it, and started as he did so—letting the sun-glass fall from his fingers.

Looking around, he perceived his companion standing apart—unheeding as she was unheeded—with head slightly drooping, and eyes turned downward upon the rock—her face still bearing the expression of a profound anguish which her thoughts had called forth.

The heart of Smythje melted within him. He knew her complaint—he knew its cure. The remedy was in his hands. Was it right any longer to withhold it? A word from him, and that sad face would be instantly suffused with smiles! Should that word be spoken or postponed?

Spoken! prompted humanity. Spoken! echoed Smythje's sympathetic heart. Yes! perish the cue and the climax! Perish the fine speech and the rehearsal with Thoms—perish everything to "relieve the deaw queet-yaw fwom the agony she is suffwing!"

With this noble resolve, the confident lover stepped up to the side of his beloved, leaving a distance of some three feet between them. His movements were those of a man about entering upon the performance of some ceremonial of the grandest importance; and to Mr. Smythje, in reality, it was so.

The look of surprise with which the young creole regarded him, neither deterred him from proceeding, nor in anywise interfered with the air of solemn gravity which his countenance had all at once assumed.

Bending one knee down upon the rock—where he had dropped the glass—and placing

his left hand over the region of his heart, while with the right he had raised his hat some six inches above his perfumed curls, there and then he was about to unburden himself of that speech, studied for the occasion—committed to Smythje's memory, and more than a dozen times delivered in the hearing of Thoms—there and then was he on the eve of offering to Kate Vaughan his hand—his heart—his whole love and estate—when just at this formidable crisis, the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the edge of the rock, and behind, a black-plumed beaver hat, shadowing the face of a beautiful woman!

Herbert Vaughan!—Judith Jessuron!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OBSCURATION.

"INTAWUPTED!" exclaimed Smythje, briskly restoring his person to its erect position. "What an infawnal baw!" he continued, drawing out his handkerchief, and dusting the knee on which he had been kneeling. "I wondaw who are the intwoodaws? Aw! ah! It's the young fellaw, yaw cousin! Shawly it is; and—a—a pwetty girl with him—a dooced pwetty girl, ba Jawve!"

A satirical titter, loud enough to be termed a laugh, was heard issuing from between the white teeth of the Jewess. It somewhat discomfited Smythje: since he knew that the satire could only be pointed at the ridiculous *tableau* just broken up, and of which he had himself been the conspicuous figure. His *sang froid*, however, did not quite forsake him, for the Cockney possessed considerable presence of mind—the offspring of an infinite superciliousness. This at the moment came to his

relief, bringing with it an idea that promised to rescue him from his embarrassment. The spy-glass lying upon the rock suggested the idea.

Dropping back upon his knee—in an attitude similar to that from which he had just arisen—he took up the telescope, and, once more rising to his feet, presented it to Kate Vaughan, as she stood bent and blushing.

The *ruse* was well intended, and not badly executed; but Mr. Smythje had to deal with one as cunning as himself. It was of no use endeavouring to throw dust in the keen, quick eyes of Judith Jessuron; and the laugh was repeated, only in a louder and more quizzical tone.

It ended in Smythje himself joining in the laughter, which, under the circumstances, was the very best course he could have pursued.

Notwithstanding the absurdity of the situation, Herbert did not seem to share in his companion's mirth. On the contrary, a shadow was visible upon his brow—not that produced by the gradually deepening twilight of the eclipse—but one that had spread suddenly over his face at sight of the kneeling Smythje.

"Miss Vaughan!" pronounced the Jewess, springing lightly upon the rock, and, with a nod of recognition, advancing towards the young creole and her companion; "an unexpected pleasure this! I hope we are not intruding?"

"Not at all—nothing of the sawt, I ashaw yaw," replied Smythje, with one of his profoundest bows.

"Mr. Smythje—Miss Jessuron," interposed Kate, performing the duty of introduction with dignified but courteous politeness.

"We have climbed up to view this eclipse," continued Judith. "The same errand as yourselves, I presume?" added she, with a glance of quizzical malignity directed towards Kate.

"Aw, yes! sawtinly!" stammered out Smythje, as if slightly confused by the innuendo of the interrogative. "That is pwecisely the pawpose which bwought us heaw—to view this cewestial phenomenon fwom the Jumbé Wock. A spwendid observatowy it is, ba Jawve!"

"You have had the advantage of us," rejoined Judith. "I feared we should arrive too late. Perhaps, we are soon enough?"

The satirical tone and glance were reiterated.

Perhaps Kate Vaughan did not perceive the meaning of this ambiguous interrogatory, though addressed to her even more pointedly than the former; at all events, she did not reply to it. Her eyes and thoughts were elsewhere.

"Quite in time, Miss Jessuwon!" answered Smythje. "The ekwipse is fawst assuming a most intewesting phase. In a few minutes the sun will be in penumbwa. If yaw will step this way, yaw may get a bettaw standing-place. Pawmit me to offaw yaw the tewescope? Aw, haw!" continued he, addressing himself to Herbert, who had just come forward, "aw, how do, ma fwiend? Happy to have the pwesyaw of meeting you again!"

As he said this, he held out his hand, with a single finger projecting beyond the others.

Herbert, though declining the proffered finger, returned the salutation with sufficient courtesy; and Smythje, turning aside to attend upon Judith, escorted her to that edge of the platform facing towards the eclipse.

By this withdrawal—perhaps little re-

gretted by either of the cousins—they were left alone.

A bow, somewhat stiff and formal, was the only salutation that had yet passed between them; and even for some seconds after the others had gone aside, they remained without speaking to each other.

Herbert was the first to break the embarrassing silence.

"Miss Vaughan!" said he, endeavouring to conceal the emotion which, however, his trembling voice betrayed, "I fear our presence here will be considered an intrusion? I would have retired, but that my companion willed it otherwise."

"*Miss* Vaughan!" mentally repeated the young creole, as the phrase fell strangely upon her ear, prompting her, perhaps, to a very different rejoinder from that she would otherwise have made.

"Since you could not follow your *own* inclination, perhaps it was wiser for you to remain. Your presence here, so far as I am concerned, is no intrusion, I assure you. As for *my* companion, he appears satisfied enough, does he not?"

The rapid exchange of words, with an occasional cachinnation, heard from the other side of the rock, told that a gay conversation was going on between Smythje and the Jewess.

"I, regret that our arrival should have led even to your temporary separation. Shall I take Mr. Smythje's place and permit him to rejoin you?"

The reply was calculated to widen the breach between the two cousins.

It was indebted for its character to the interpretation which Herbert had placed upon Kate's last interrogatory.

"Certainly, if it would be more agreeable to you to do so," retorted Kate, in a tone of defiant bitterness.

Here a pause occurred in the conversation, which from the first had been carried on defiance against defiance. It was Herbert's turn to speak; but the challenge conveyed in Kate's last words placed him in a position where it was not easy to make an appropriate rejoinder, and he remained silent.

It was now the crisis of the eclipse—the moment of deepest darkness. The sun's disc had become completely obscured by the opaque

orb of the night, and the earth lay lurid under the sombre shadow. Stars appeared in the sky, to show that the universe still existed; and those voices of the forest heard only in nocturnal hours, came pealing up to the summit of the rock—a testimony that terrestrial nature was not yet extinct.

It was equally a crisis between two loving hearts. Though standing near, those wild words had outlawed them from each other, far more than if ten thousand miles extended between them. The darkness without was naught to the darkness within. In the sky there were stars to delight the eye; from the forest came sounds to solace the soul; but no star illumined the horizon of their hearts with its ray of hope—no sound of joy cheered the silent gloom that bitterly embraced them.

For some minutes not a word was exchanged between the cousins, nor spoken either to those who were their sharers in the spectacle. These, too, were silent. The solemnity of the scene had made its impression upon all; and, against the dark background of the sky, the figures of all four appeared in sombre *silhouette*—motionless as the rock on which they stood.

Thus for some minutes stood Herbert and Kate without exchanging word or thought. Side by side they were, so near and so silent, that each might have heard the breathing of the other.

The situation was one of painful embarrassment, and might have been still more so, but for the eclipse; which, just then complete, shrouded both in the deep obscurity of its shadow, and hindered them from observing one another.

Only for a short while did the darkness continue; the eclipse soon re-assuming the character of a penumbra.

One by one the stars disappeared from the canopy of the sky—now hastening to recover its azure hue. The creatures of darkness, wondering at the premature return of day, sank cowering into a terrified silence; and the god of the heavens, coming forth triumphantly from the cloud that had for a short while concealed him, once more poured his joyous effulgence upon the earth.

The re-dawning of the light showed the cousins still standing in the same relative position—unchanged even as to their attitudes.

During the interval of darkness Herbert had neither stirred nor spoken; and after the

harsh rejoinder to which, in the bitterness of her pique, the young creole had given words, it was not her place to continue the conversation.

Pained though Herbert was by his cousin's reply, he nevertheless remembered his indebtedness to her—the vows he had made—the proud proffer at parting. Was he now to repudiate the debt of gratitude and prove faithless to his promise? Was he to pluck from his breast that silken *souvenir*, still sheltering there, though in secret and unseen?

True, it was but the memorial of an act of friendship—of mere cousinly kindness. He had never had reason to regard it in any other light; and now, more than ever, was he sure it had no higher signification.

She had never said she loved him—never said a word that could give him the right to reproach her. On her side there was no repudiation, since there had been no compromise. It was unjust to condemn her—cruel to defy her, as he had done.

That she loved another—was that a crime?

Herbert now knew that she loved another—was as sure of it as that he stood upon the Jumbé Rock. That interrupted *tableau* had left him no loop to hang a doubt on. The

relative position of the parties proclaimed the purpose—a proposal.

The kneeling lover may not have obtained his answer; but who could doubt what that answer was to have been? The situation itself proclaimed consent.

Bitter as were these reflections, Herbert made an effort to subdue them. He resolved, if possible, to stifle his spleen; and, upon the ruin of his hopes, restore that relationship—the only one that could now exist between himself and his cousin—friendship.

With a superhuman effort he succeeded; and this triumph of virtue over spite, backed by the strongest inclinings of the heart, for a moment solaced his spirit, and rendered it calmer.

Alas! that such triumph can be only temporary. The struggle upon which he was entering was one in which no man has ever succeeded. Love undenied, may end in friendship; but love thwarted or unreciprocated, never!

"Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves its way between
Heights, that appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted;
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom——"

Herbert Vaughan was perhaps too young—too inexperienced in the affairs of the heart—to have ever realized the sentiment so expressed; else would he have desisted from his idle attempt, and surrendered himself at once to the despair that was certain to succeed it.

Innocent — perhaps happily so — of the knowledge of these recondite truths, he yielded to the nobler resolve—ignorant of the utter impracticability of its execution.

CHAPTER XV.

AN ENCOUNTER OF EYES.

While Herbert Vaughan was making these reflections, the light began to re-dawn — gradually, as it were, raising the veil from the face of his cousin. He could not resist turning to gaze upon it. During the interval of the obscurity, a change had passed over the countenance of the young girl, both in its hue and expression. Herbert noticed the change. It even startled him. Before, and during the unhappy dialogue, he had looked upon a flushed cheek, a fiery eye, an air proud and haughty, with all the indices of defiant indifference.

All were gone: Kate's eye still sparkled, but with a milder light; a uniform pallor overspread her cheeks, as if the eclipse had robbed them of their roses; and the proud expression had entirely disappeared, replaced by one of sadness, or rather of pain.

Withal, the face was lovely as ever—lovelier, thought Herbert.

Why that sudden transformation? What had caused it? Whence sprang that painful thought, that was betraying itself in the pale cheek and lips compressed and quivering? Was it the happiness of another that was making that misery? Smythje seemed happy—very happy, to judge from his oft-repeated "Haw! haw!"

Was this the cause of that expression of extreme sadness that displayed itself on the countenance of his cousin?

So did Herbert interpret it.

Making a fresh effort to subdue within himself the same spirit which he believed to be actuating her, he remained silent—though unable to withdraw his glance from that lorn but lovely face.

While still gazing upon it, a sigh escaped him. It could scarce have been heard by her who stood nearest; nor hers by him: for she had also sighed, and at the same instant of time! Perhaps both were moved by some secret sympathetic instinct?

Herbert had succeeded in obtaining another momentary triumph over his emotions: and

was once more on the eve of uttering words of friendship, when the young girl looked up and reciprocated his gaze. It was the first time during the interview their eyes had met: for up to that moment Kate had only regarded her cousin with furtive glances.

For some seconds they stood face to face—each gazing into the eyes of the other, as if both were the victims of some irresistible fascination.

Not a word passed between them—their very breathing was stilled. Both seemed to consider the time too important for speech: for they were seeking in one another's eyes—those faithful mirrors of the soul — those truest interpreters of the heart—the solution of that, the most interesting enigma of their existence.

This silent interrogation was instinctive as mutual—uncorrupted by a shadow of coquetry. It was bold and reckless as innocence itself—unregarding outward observation. What cared they for the eclipse? What for the sun or the moon, or the waning stars? What for the universe itself? Less — far less for those human forms that chanced to be so near them!

Drew they gratification from that mutual

gaze? They must—else why did they continue it?

Not for long: not for long were they allowed. An eye was upon them—the eye of that beautiful demon.

Ah! fair Judith, thy flirtation has proved a failure! The *ruse* has recoiled upon thyself!

The golden sunlight once more fell upon the Jumbé Rock, revealing the forms of four individuals—all youthful—all in love, though two only were beloved!

The returning light brought no joy to Judith Jessuron.

It revealed to her that glance of mutual fascination, which, with a quick, sharp cry, she had interrupted.

A bitter embarrassment seemed all at once to have seized upon her proud spirit, and dragged it into the dust.

Skilled in the silent language of the eyes, she had read in those of Herbert Vaughan, as he bent them upon his cousin, an expression that stung her, even to the utterance of a scream!

From that moment the flirtation with Smythje ceased; and the Cockney exquisite was forsaken in the most unceremonious man-

ner left to continue his telescopic observations alone.

The conversation was no longer *dos y dos*, but at once changed to a *trio;* and finally restored to its original *quartette* form—soon, however, to be broken up by an abrupt separation of the parties.

The Jewess was the first to propose departure—the first to make it. She descended from the Jumbé Rock in a less lively mood than that in which she had climbed up to it; inwardly anathematizing the eclipse, and the fortune that had guided her to the choice of such an ill-starred observatory.

Perhaps, had the interview been prolonged, the cousins might have separated with a better understanding of each other than was expressed in that cold, ceremonious adieu with which they parted.

Smythje and Kate Vaughan were once more alone upon the summit of the rock; and the supercilious lover was now free to continue the declaration.

One might suppose that he would have instantly dropped back upon his knees, and finished the performance so vexatiously interrupted.

Not so, however. The spirit of Smythje's dream seemed equally to have undergone a change; as if he, too, *had seen something*.

His air of high confidence had departed, as also the climax on which he had counted: for the sun's disc was now quite clear of the eclipse, and the pretty speeches, intended for an anterior time, would now have been pointless and inappropriate.

Whether it was this that influenced him, or a presentiment that the offer of his heart and hand might just then stand some chance of a rejection, can never be known: since Smythje, who alone could divulge it, has left no record of the reason.

Certain it is, however, that the proposal did not take place on the Jumbé Rock on the day of the eclipse; but was postponed, *sine die*, to some future occasion.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SMYTHJE BALL.

As if the eclipse had not been a sufficient climax to the round of *fêtes* got up for the express amusement of Mr. Smythje, only a few days—or, rather, nights—after, still another was inaugurated, to do honour to this young British lion.

Unlike the eclipse, it was a terrestrial phenomenon—one of the most popular of sublunary entertainments—a ball—a complimentary ball—Mr. Smythje the recipient of the compliment.

Montego Bay was to be the place; which, notwithstanding its *provinciality*, had long been celebrated for its brilliant assemblies—from the time that fandangoes were danced by the old Spanish pork-butchers, down to that hour when Mr. Montagu Smythje had condescended to honour its *salons* by the introduction of some very fashionable steps from the world's metropolis.

The ball was to be a grand affair—one of the grandest ever given in the Bay—and all Planterdom was expected to be present.

Of course, Kate Vaughan would be there; and so, too, the Custos himself.

Mr. Smythje would be the hero of the night; and, as such, surrounded by the fairest of the fair—hedged in by a galaxy of beautiful belles, and beset by an army of match-making parents, all seeking success with as much eagerness as Loftus Vaughan himself.

Under these circumstances, it would be but simple prudence that Kate should be there to look after him: for the worthy Custos was not unacquainted with the adage, that "the sweetest smelling flower is that nearest the nose."

Mr. Vaughan would have rejoiced at the opportunity thus offered, of letting all the *monde* of Jamaica know the relationship in which he stood, and was likely to stand, to the distinguished individual to whom the entertainment was dedicated. He had no doubt but that Kate would be chosen as the conspicuous partner: for well knew he the condition of Mr. Smythje's mind upon that subject. To him the latter had made no secret of his

affections; and the cunning Custos, who had been all along warily watching the development of the passion, now knew to a certainty that the heart of Montagu's lord was not only smitten with his daughter, but was irretrievably lost—so far as such a heart could suffer love's perdition.

No doubt, then, Mr. Vaughan would have looked forward to the Smythje ball with pleasant anticipation—as likely to afford him a social triumph—but for a little circumstance that had lately come to his knowledge. It was the incident which had transpired on the Jumbé Rock—the meeting between his daughter and nephew on the day of the eclipse.

The Custos had been the more particular in obtaining the details of that interview from his presumptive son-in-law, on account of a suspicion that had arisen in his mind as to the inclinings of his daughter's heart. Something she had said—during the first days after Herbert's *brusque* dismissal from Mount Welcome—some sympathetic expressions she had made use of—unguarded and overheard, had given rise to this suspicion of her father.

He was sufficiently annoyed about Kate having met Herbert on the Jumbé Rock; and believed it quite possible that the latter had come there in the hope of encountering his cousin.

In Mount Welcome the name of Herbert Vaughan was no longer heard. Even Kate—whether it was that she had grown more sage—for she had been chided more than once for introducing it into the conversation—or whether she had ceased to think of him—even she never pronounced his name.

For all that, Mr. Vaughan was still vexed with some lingering suspicion that in that direction lurked danger; and this determined him to prevent, as far as possible, any further interview between his daughter and nephew.

After the encounter on the Jumbé Rock, he had taken his daughter to task upon this subject; and, using the full stretch of parental authority, compelled her to a solemn promise, that she was not again to speak to her cousin, nor even acknowledge his presence!

It was a hard promise for the poor girl to make. Perhaps it would have been still harder, had she known Herbert's disposition towards her.

There can be no doubt that her father, in extracting this promise, had in view the event about to take place—the grand Smythje ball. There an encounter between the cousins was not only possible, but probable; so much so as to render Mr. Vaughan apprehensive. Judith Jessuron was sure to be present—perhaps the Jew himself; and Herbert, of course.

The nephew was now cordially disliked. Stung by the defiant speeches which the young man had made on the day of his arrival, his uncle even detested him: for the proud planter was himself too poor in spirit to admire this quality in any one else.

The Custos had heard all about the hospitality which his neighbour was extending to Herbert, and the kindnesses which the patron was lavishing upon his *protégé*. Though not a little mystified by what was going on, he availed himself of the ordinary explanation—that it was done to vex himself; and, if so, the stratagem of the Jew was proving perfectly successful: for vexed was Mr. Vaughan to his very heart's core.

The night of the Smythje ball came round in due course. The grand ball-room of the

Bay was decorated as became the occasion. Flags, festoons, and devices hung around the walls; and over the doorway a large transparency—supported by the loyal emblems of the Union Jack and banner of St. George, and surmounted by the colonial colours—proclaimed, in letters of eighteen inches diameter:—

"WELCOME TO SMYTHJE!"

The hour arrived; the band shortly after; close followed by strings of carriages of every kind current in the Island, containing scores—ay, hundreds of dancers. Twenty miles was nothing to go to a Jamaica ball.

The grand barouche of Loftus Vaughan arrived with the rest, only fashionably behind time, bringing the Custos himself, his truly beautiful daughter, but, above all—as before all perhaps should have been mentioned—the hero of the night.

"WELCOME TO SMYTHJE!"

How his proud heart swelled with triumph under the magnificent ruffles of his shirt, as he caught sight of the flattering transparency!

How conquering his smile, as he turned towards Kate Vaughan, to note the effect which it could not fail to produce!

"Welcome to Smythje!" pealed from a hundred pairs of lips, as the carriage drove up to the door; and then a loud cheer followed the words of greeting; and then the distinguished stranger was ushered into the ball-room; and, after remaining a few moments in a conspicuous position—the cynosure of at least two hundred pairs of eyes—the great man set the example by pairing off with a partner.

The band struck up, and the dancing began.

It need scarce be said who was Smythje's first partner—Kate Vaughan, of course. The Custos had taken care of that.

Smythje looked superb. Thoms had been at him all the afternoon. His hay-coloured hair was in full curl—his whiskers in amplest bush—his moustache crimped spirally at the points; and his cheek pinked with just the slightest tinting of vermillion.

Arrived a little late, the Jewess had not appeared in the first set. In the waltz she was conspicuous: not from her dress of rich purple velvet—not from the splendid tiara of

pearls that glistened against the background of her glossy raven hair—not from the dazzling whiteness of her teeth, that gleamed between lips like curved and parted rose-leaves —not from the damask tinting of her cheeks; nor the liquid light that flashed incessantly from her black, Israelitish eyes—not from any of these was she conspicuous; but from all combined into one, and composing a grand and imperious picture.

It was a picture upon which more than one eye gazed with admiration; and more than one continued to gaze.

The partner of Judith was not unworthy to embrace such beauty.

She was in the arms of a young man, a stranger to most in the room; but the glances bestowed upon him by bright eyes—some interrogative, some furtive, some openly admiring—promised him an easy introduction to any one he might fancy to know.

Not that this stranger appeared to be conceitedly conscious of the graces which nature had so lavishly bestowed upon him; or even sensible of the good fortune that had given him such a partner.

On the contrary, he was dancing with de-

spondency in his look, and a cloud upon his brow that even the exciting whirl of the waltz was failing to dissipate!

The partner of Judith Jessuron was Herbert Vaughan.

* * * * *

A ball-room may be likened to a kaleidoscope: the personages are the same, their relative positions constantly changing. Design it or not, either during the dance or the interregnum—one time or another—you will find yourself face to face, or side by side, with every individual in the room.

So in the ball-room of Montego Bay came face to face two sets of waltzers—Smythje and Kate, Herbert and Judith.

The situation arose as they were resting from the dizzy whirl of a waltz.

Smythje bent profoundly towards the floor—Judith, with an imperious sweep, returned the salutation—Herbert bowed to his cousin, with a half-doubting, half-appealing glance; but the nod received in return was so slight, so distant, that even the keen-eyed Custos, closely watching every movement of the quartette, failed to perceive it!

Poor Kate! She knew that the paternal eye, severely set, was upon her. She remembered that painful promise.

Not a word passed between the parties. Scarce a moment stood they together. Herbert, stung by Kate's salutation—unexpectedly cold, almost insultingly distant—warped his arm around the waist of his willing partner, and spun off through the unobservant crowd.

Though often again upon that same night Smythje and Kate, Herbert and the Jewess were respectively partners—so often as to lead to general observation—never again did the four stand *vis-à-vis* or side by side. Whenever chance threatened to bring them together, design, or something like it, stepped in to thwart the approximation!

Almost all the night did Herbert dance with the Jewess—no longer with despondency in his look, but with the semblance of a gay and reckless joy. Never had Judith received from the young Englishman such ardent attention; and for the first time since their introduction to each other did she feel conscious of something like a correspondence to her own fierce love. For the moment her proud, cruel heart

became dissolved to a true feminine tenderness; and in the spiral undulations of the waltz, as she coiled round the robust form of her partner, her cheek rested upon his shoulder, as if laid there to expire in the agony of an exquisite bliss.

She stayed not to question the cause of Herbert's devotedness. Her own heart, blinded by love, and yearning for reciprocity, threw open its portals to receive the passion without challenge or scrutiny—without knowing whether it was real or only apparent.

A wild anguish would she have experienced at that moment, could she have divined what was passing in Herbert's mind. Little did she suspect that his devotedness to her was only a demonstration intended to act upon another. Little dreamt she that real love for another was the cause and origin of that counterfeit that was deceiving herself. Happily for her heart's peace she knew not this.

Herbert alone knew it. As the kaleidoscope evolved the dazzling dancers one after another, often did the face of Kate Vaughan flit before the eyes of her cousin, and his before her eyes. On such occasions, the glance hastily exchanged

was one of defiant indifference: for both were playing at piques! The cold salutation had given *him* the cue, ignorant as he was of its cause. *She* had begun the game only a little later—on observing the attitude of extreme contentment which Herbert had assumed towards his companion. She knew not that it was studied. Her skill in coquetry, although sufficient for the pretence of indifference, was not deep enough to discern it in him; and both were now behaving as if each believed the love of the other beyond all hope.

Before abandoning the ball-room, this belief —erroneous as it might be on both sides—received further confirmation. A circumstance arose that strengthened it to a full and perfect conviction.

From the gossip of a crowded ball-room many a secret may be learnt. In those late hours, when the supper champagne has untied the tongue, and dancers begin to fancy each other deaf, he who silently threads his way or stands still among the crowd, may catch many a sentence not intended to be overheard, and often least of all by himself. Many an involuntary eavesdropper has fallen into this catastrophe. At least two instances occurred

at the Smythje ball; and to the two individuals in whom, perhaps, we are most interested—Herbert and Kate Vaughan.

Herbert for a moment was alone. Judith, not that she had tired of her partner, but perhaps only to save appearances, was dancing with another. It was not Smythje, whom all the evening she had studiously avoided. She remembered the incident on the Jumbé Rock; and feared that dancing with him might conduct to a similar disposition of partners as that which had occurred on the day of the eclipse.

It was not flirtation in any way. On that night Judith had no need. Confident in her success with Herbert, she was contented; and cared not to do anything that might hazard a rupture of the blissful chain she believed she had woven around him.

Herbert was standing alone in the crowd. Two young planters were near him, engaged in conversation. They had mixed their liquor, and therefore talked loud.

Herbert could not help hearing what they talked of; and, having heard, could not help heeding it. He was interested in the subject, though not from its singularity; for it was

the common topic of the ball-room, and had been throughout the night. The theme was Smythje; and coupled with his name was that of Kate Vaughan.

On hearing these names, Herbert was no longer an involuntary listener. He strained his ears to catch every word. He had not heard the beginning of the dialogue, but the introduction was easily inferred.

"When is it to come off?" inquired the least knowing of the planters, from him who was imparting the information.

"No time fixed yet," was the reply; "at least, none has been mentioned. Soon, I suppose."

"There'll be a grand spread upon the occasion—breakfast, dinner, supper, and ball, no doubt?"

"Sure to be all that. The Custos is not the man to let the ceremony pass without all the *éclat*."

"Honeymoon tour afterwards?"

"Of course. He takes her to London. I believe they are to reside there. Mr. Smythje don't much relish our colonial life: he misses the opera. A pity: since it'll make one beautiful woman less in the Island!"

"Well, all I've got to say is, that Loff Vaughan has sold his nigger well."

"Oh, for shame! to use such a word in speaking of the beautiful—the accomplished Miss Vaughan. Come, Thorndyke! I'm shocked at you."

Thorndyke, by the expression, had hazarded the punching of his head—not by his companion, but by a stranger who stood near.

Herbert curbed his indignation. Kate cared not for him! Perhaps she would not have accepted him even as her champion!

Almost at that same moment Kate, too, was listening to a dialogue painfully analogous. Smythje could not dance all the night with her. Too many claimed the honour of his partnership; and for a set or two she had been forsaken by him—left under the guardianship of the watchful Custos.

"Who can he be?" inquired one of two gentle gossips within earshot of Kate.

"A young Englishman, I have heard: a relative of Vaughans of Mount Welcome; though, for some reason, not acknowledged by the Custos."

"That bold girl appears willing enough to acknowledge him. Who is she?"

"A Miss Jessuron. She is the daughter of the old Jew penn-keeper, who used to deal largely in blacks."

"Faugh! she is behaving as if she belonged to a ——"

The last word was whispered, and Kate did not hear it.

"True enough!" asserted the other; "but, as they are engaged, that, I take it, is nobody's business but their own. He's a stranger in the Island; and don't know much about certain people's position, I suppose. A pity! He seems a nice sort of a young fellow; but as he makes his bed, so let him lie. Ha! ha! If report speaks true of Miss Judith Jessuron, he'll find no bed of roses there. Ha! ha! ha!"

What causes merriment to one may make another miserable. This was true of the words last spoken. From the speaker and her companion they elicited a laugh—from Kate Vaughan they drew a sigh, deep and sad.

She left the ball with a bleeding heart.

"Lost! lost for ever!" murmured she, as she laid her cheek upon a sleepless pillow.

"Won!" triumphantly exclaimed Judith

Jessuron, flinging her majestic form on a couch. "Herbert Vaughan is mine!"

"Lost! lost for ever!" soliloquized Herbert, as he closed the door of his solitary sleeping-room.

"Won!" cried the victorious Smythje, entering his elegant bed-chamber, and, in the fervour of his enthusiasm, dropping his metropolitan *patois*. "Kate Vaughan is mine!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE BALL.

THE time was rapidly drawing nigh when the ambitious scheme of the Custos Vaughan was either to be crowned with success, or end in failure.

Of the latter he had little apprehension. Though Smythje, having lost the opportunity of the eclipse, had not yet declared himself, Mr. Vaughan knew it was his intention to do so on an early occasion. Indeed, the declaration was only postponed by the advice of the Custos himself, whose counsel had been sought by his intended son-in-law.

Not that Mr. Vaughan had any fear of Kate's giving a negative answer. The stern father knew that he had his daughter too well in hand for that. His wish would be her will —on that point was he determined; and it was less the fear of a refusal than some other circumstances that had hindered him from bringing the matter earlier to a crisis.

As for Smythje, he never dreamt of a rejection. Kate's behaviour at the ball had confirmed him in the belief that she was entirely his own; and that without him her future existence would be one of misery. Her pale cheek, and sad, thoughtful air, as she appeared next morning at the breakfast-table, told him too plainly that she would never be happy under any other name than that of Mrs. Smythje.

Again, upon that morning, it occurred to him that the proposal should be made. It would be an appropriate *finale* to the *fête* of the preceding night.

His brow still glowing with the laurels that had bedecked it, like a second Antony he would approach his Cleopatra, triumphantly irresistible.

After breakfast, Mr. Smythje drew the Custos into a corner, and once more expressed his solicitude to become his son-in-law.

Whether, because Kate's behaviour at the ball had also impressed Mr. Vaughan with the appropriateness of the time, or for some other reason, Smythje found him agreeable. Only first, the father desired to have a few words with his daughter, in order to prepare her for

the distinguished honour of which she was so soon to be the recipient.

Kate had gone out into the kiosk. There Mr. Vaughan sought her, to bring about the proposed preliminary interview. Smythje also stepped into the garden; but, instead of going near the summer-house, he sauntered along the walks at a distance, occasionally plucking a flower or chasing the butterflies, bright and gay as his own thoughts.

Kate's countenance still preserved the air of melancholy that had clouded it all the morning; and the approach of the Custos did nothing to dissipate it. On the contrary, its shadows became deeper, as if the ponderous presence of her father, coming between her and the sun, was about to shut out the little light left shining in her heart.

From what she had heard that morning, she presumed that the time had arrived when she must either submit to the wishes of her father, and resign herself to an unhappy fate; or, by disobedience, brave his anger, and perhaps—she knew not what.

She only knew that she did not like Mr. Smythje, and never could. She did not hate the man—she did not detest him. Her

feeling towards him was that of indifference, slightly tinctured with contempt. Harmless she deemed him; and, no doubt, a harmless husband he would make; but that was not the sort to suit the taste of the young creole. Far different was the hero of her heart.

Neither the lover nor his prospective father-in-law could have chosen a time more opportune for making their approaches. Although at that time Kate Vaughan felt towards Smythje more indifference—perhaps more contempt—than she had ever done, at that very hour was she wavering in the intention, hitherto cherished, of refusing him.

Though both lover and father had erroneously interpreted her air of dejection, it was nevertheless in their favour. It was not love for Smythje under which she was suffering; but despair of this passion for another; and in that despair lay the hope—the only hope—of the lord of Montagu Castle.

It was a despair not unmingled with pique—with anger; that proud rage, which painfully wringing the heart, prompts it to desperate resolves: even to the utter annihilation of all future hope—as if happiness could be

obtained by destroying the happiness of the one only being who could give it!

Yes, the heart of Kate Vaughan had reached, or almost reached, that fearful phase of our moral nature, when love, convinced of its unrequital, seeks solace in revenge!

The Smythje ball, which had crowned the hopes of him to whom the compliment was given, had been fatal to those of Kate Vaughan.

Certain it was that she had conceived hopes that pointed to Herbert Vaughan. Love could scarce have been kindled without them. They were founded upon those fond words spoken at their first parting. Slight as was the foundation, up to that night had they endured: for she had treasured and cherished them in spite of absence, and calumny, and false report.

True, as time passed they had waxed fainter, with longer intervals of doubt, until the day in which had occurred the unexpected incident of their meeting upon the Jumbé Rock.

Then they had become revived, and since then they had lived with more or less intermission until that fatal night—the night of the Smythje ball—when they were doomed to utter extinction.

All night long he had come but once near her—only that once by the mere chance of changing positions. And that bow—that single salutation, friendly as it might have been deemed, she could only remember as being cold —almost cynical!

She did not think how cold and distant had been her own—at least, how much so it must have appeared to him. Though her eyes had often sought him in the crowd, and often found him, she did not know that his were equally following her, and equally as often fixed upon her. Both were ignorant of this mutual espionage: for each had studiously declined responding to the glance of the other.

Never more that night had he come near—never again had he shown a desire or made an attempt to address her; though opportunities there were—many—when no paternal eye was upon her to prevent an interview.

All night long had his attentions been occupied by another — apparently engrossed— and that other, a bold, beautiful woman—just such an one as Herbert might love.

"He loves her! I am sure he loves her!" was the reflection that passed often and painfully through the thoughts of Kate Vaughan,

as she swept her eye across that crowded ball-room.

And then came the climax—that half-whispered gossip that reached her ear, falling upon it like a knell of death. They were to be married? they were already betrothed!

It needed no more. In that moment the hopes of the young creole were crushed—so cruelly, so completely, that, in the dark future before her, no gleam of light arose to re-suscitate them.

No wonder the morning sun shone upon a pale cheek—no wonder that an air of deep dejection sate upon the countenance of Kate Vaughan.

In this melancholy mood did the father find his daughter on entering the kiosk.

She made no attempt to conceal it—not even with a counterfeit of a smile. Rather with a frown did she receive him; and in her eyes might have been detected the slightest scintillation of anger, whether or not he was its object.

It is possible that just then the thought was passing through her mind that but for him her destiny might have been different; but for him, Herbert Vaughan, not Montagu Smythje,

might have been on the eve of offering for her hand, which would then have gone with her heart. Now, in the contingency of her consenting to the proposal she expected, would she and Herbert be separated, and for ever!

Never more was she to experience that supreme happiness — the supremest known upon earth, and perhaps, equalling the joys of heaven itself—never more could she indulge in that sweet delicious dream—a virgin's love—with the hope of its being returned. Her love might remain like a flower that had lost its perfume, only to shed it on the solitary air; no more a sweet passion, but a barren, bitter thought, without hope to cheer it till the end of time.

Ah, Custos Vaughan! proud, foolish parent! Could you have known how you were aiding to destroy the happiness of your child—how you were contributing to crush that young heart —you would have approached less cheerfully to complete the ceremony of its sacrifice!

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAVING THE WAY.

"KATHERINE!" gravely began the father, on stepping inside the kiosk.

"Father!"

The parental appellative was pronounced in a low murmur, the speaker not uplifting her eyes from the object upon which she had been gazing.

That object was a small silken purse that lay upon the table. Stringless it was, though the broken strands of a blue ribbon attached to it showed that it had not always been so.

Loftus Vaughan knew not the history of that purse, neither why it lay there, what had stripped it of its string, or why his daughter was so sadly gazing upon it. This last circumstance he noticed on entering the kiosk.

"Ah, your pretty purse!" said he, taking it up, and examining it more minutely.

"Some one has torn the string from it—a pity! who can have done it?"

Little did he care for an answer. As little did he suspect that the rape of that bit of ribbon had aught to do with his daughter's dejection, which he had observed throughout the morning. The surprise he had expressed, and the question put, were only intended to initiate the more serious conversation he was about to introduce.

"Oh, papa! it don't signify," said Kate, avoiding a direct answer; "'tis but a bit of ribbon. I can easily replace it by another."

Ah, Kate! you may easily replace the ribbon upon the purse, but not so easily that peace of mind which parted from your bosom at the same time. When that string was torn, torn, too, were the strings of your heart!

Some such reflection must have passed through her mind as she made the reply; for the shadow visibly deepened over her countenance.

Mr. Vaughan pursued the subject of the purse no further, but looking through the lattice-work and perceiving Smythje in chase of the butterflies, endeavoured to draw his

daughter's attention to that sportive gentleman.

This was the more easily done as Mr. Smythje was at the moment humming a tune, and could be heard as well as seen.

"'I'd be a butterfly,'"—

sang Smythje—

"'born in a bower,
Where lilies, and roses, and violets meet;
Sporting for ever, from flower to flower;
And——'"

And then, as if to contradict this pleasant routine of insect life, he was at that instant seen seizing a splendid *vanessa*, and crushing the frail creature between his kid-gloved fingers!

"Isn't he a superb fellow?" said Mr. Vaughan, first gazing enthusiastically on Smythje, and then fixing his eyes upon his daughter, to note the character of the reply.

"I suppose he must be, papa—since everybody says so."

There was no enthusiasm in Kate's answer—nothing to encourage the Custos.

"Don't *you think so*, Kate"

This was coming more directly to the point; but the response proved equally evasive.

"*You* think so, papa—and that should do for both of us."

The melodious voice of Smythje again interrupted the dialogue, and turned it into a new channel.

Smythje, singing,—

"I'd never languish for wealth nor for power,
I'd never sigh to see slaves at my feet!"

"Ah, Mr. Smythje!" exclaimed the Custos, in a kind of soliloquy, though meant for the ear of Kate; "you have no need to sigh for them—you have them; five hundred of them. And beauties, too! Wealth and power, indeed! You needn't languish for either one or the other. The estate of Montagu Castle provides you with both, my boy!"

Smythje, still chantant:—

"Those who have wealth may be watchful and wary,
Power, alas! nought but misery brings."

"Do you hear that, Kate? What fine sentiments he utters!"

"Very fine, and *apropos* to the occasion," replied Kate, sarcastically. "They are not his, however; but, no doubt, he feels them; and that's just as good."

"A splendid property!" continued Mr. Vaughan, returning to what interested him

more than the sentiments of the song, and not heeding the sarcasm conveyed in the speech of his daughter,—"a splendid property, I tell you; and, with mine joined to it, will make the grandest establishment in the Island. The Island, did I say? In the West Indies—ay, in the Western World!. Do you hear that, my daughter?"

"I do, papa," replied the young creole. "But you speak as if the two estates were to be joined together? Does Mr. Smythje intend to purchase Mount Welcome? or you Montagu Castle?"

These questions were asked with an air of simplicity evidently assumed. In truth, the interrogator knew well enough to what the conversation was tending; and, impatient with the ambiguity, every moment growing more painful to her, desired to bring it to its crisis.

Mr. Vaughan was equally desirous of arriving at the same result, as testified by his reply.

"Ah, Kate! you little rogue!" said he, looking gratified at the opening thus made for him. "Egad! you've just hit the nail on the head. You've guessed right—only that we

are both to be buyers. Mr. Smythje is to purchase Mount Welcome; and what do you suppose he is to pay for it? Guess that!"

"Indeed, father, I cannot! How should I know? I am sure I do not. Only this I know, that I am sorry you should think of parting with Mount Welcome. I, for one, shall be loth to leave it. Though I do not expect *now* ever to be happy here, I think I should not be happier anywhere else."

Mr. Vaughan was too much wound-up in the thread of his own thoughts to notice the emphasis on the word "now," or the double meaning of his daughter's words.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he; "Mr. Smythje's purchase won't dispossess us of Mount Welcome. Don't be afraid of that, little Kate. But, come, try and guess the price he is to pay?"

"Father, I need not try. I am sure I could not guess it—not within thousands of pounds."

"Not a thousand pounds! no, not one pound, unless his great big heart weighs that much, and his generous hand thrown into the scale —for that, Catherine, that is the price he is to pay."

Mr. Vaughan wound up this speech with a significant glance, and a triumphant gesture, expressive of astonishment at his own eloquence.

He looked for a response—one that would reciprocate his smiles and the joyful intelligence he fancied himself to have communicated.

He looked in vain. Notwithstanding the perspicuity of his explanation, Kate obstinately refused to comprehend it.

Her reply was provokingly a "shirking of the question."

"His heart and his hand, you say? Neither seem very heavy. But is it not very little for an estate where there are many hands and many hearts, too? To whom does he intend to give his? You have not let me know that, papa!"

"I shall let you know now," replied the father, his voice changing to a more serious tone, as if a little nettled by Kate's evident design to misunderstand him. "I shall let you know, by telling you what I intend to give him for Montagu Castle. I told you we were both to be buyers in this transaction. It is a fair exchange, Kate, hand for hand, and

heart for heart. Mr. Smythje freely gives his his, and I give *yours*."

"Mine!"

"Ay, yours. Surely, Kate, I have not made a mistake? Surely you are agreeable to the exchange?"

"Father," said the young girl, speaking in a tone of womanly gravity, "there can be no exchange of hearts between Mr. Smythje and myself. He may have given his to me. I know not, nor do I care. But I will not deceive you, father. My heart he can never have. It is not in my power to give it to him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Vaughan, startled by this unexpected declaration; "you are deceiving yourself, my child, when you talk thus. I do not see how you can fail to like Mr. Smythje—so generous, so accomplished, so handsome as he is! Come, you are only jesting, Kate? You do like him? You do not hate him?"

"No, no! I do not hate him! Why should I? Mr. Smythje has done nothing to offend me. I believe he is very honourable."

"Why, that is almost saying that you like him!" rejoined the father, in a tone of returning gratification.

"Liking is not love," murmured Kate, as if speaking to herself.

"It may turn to it," said the Custos, encouragingly. "It often does—especially when two people become man and wife. Besides, it's not always best for young married folks to be too fond of each other at first. As my old spelling book used to say, 'Hot love soon grows cold.' Never fear, Kate! you'll get to like Mr. Smythje well enough, when you come to be the mistress of Montagu Castle, and take rank as the grandest lady of the Island. Won't that be happiness, little Kate?"

"Ah!" thought the young creole, "a cabin shared with *him* would be greater happiness—far, far greater!"

It is needless to say that the "him" to whom the thought pointed was not Smythje.

"As Mrs. Montagu Smythje," proceeded the Custos, with a design of painting the future prospects of his daughter in still more glowing tints, "you will have troops of friends—the highest in the land. *And remember, my child, it is not so now.* You know it, Catherine?"

These last words were pronounced in a tone suggestive of some secret understanding between father and daughter.

Whether the speech produced the desired effect, he who made it did not stay to perceive; but continued on in the same breath to finish the rose-coloured picture he had essayed to paint.

"Yes, my little Kate! you will be the observed of all observers—the *cynosure* of every eye, as the poets say. Horses, slaves, dresses, carriages at will. You will make a grand tour to London—egad! I feel like going myself! In the great metropolis you will hob-nob with lords and ladies; visit the operas and balls, where you will be a belle, my girl—a belle, do you hear? Every one will be talking of Mrs. Montagu Smythje! How do you like it now?"

"Ah, papa!" replied the young creole, evidently unmoved by these promises of pomp and grandeur, "I should not like it at all. I am sure I should not. I never cared for such things—you know I do not. They cannot give happiness—at least, not to me. I should never be happy away from our own home. What pleasure should I have in a great city? None, I am sure; but quite the contrary. I should miss our grand mountains and woods—our beautiful trees with their gay, perfumed

blossoms—our bright-winged birds with their sweet songs! Operas and balls! I dislike balls; and to be the belle of one—papa, I detest the word!"

Kate, at that moment, was thinking of the Smythje ball, and its disagreeable souvenirs—perhaps the more disagreeable that, oftener than once, during the night she had heard the phrase "belle of the ball" applied to one who had aided in the desolation of her heart.

"Oh! you will get over that dislike," returned Mr. Vaughan, "once you go into fashionable society. Most young ladies do. There is no harm in balls—after a girl gets married, and her husband goes with her, to take care of her—no harm whatever. But now, Kate," continued the Custos, betraying a certain degree of nervous impatience, "we must come to an understanding. Mr. Smythje is waiting."

"For what is he waiting, papa?"

"Tut! tut! child," said Mr. Vaughan, slightly irritated by his daughter's apparent incapacity to comprehend him. "Surely you know! Have I not as good as told you? Mr. Smythje is going to—to offer you his heart and hand; and—and to ask yours in return.

That is what he is waiting to do. You will not refuse him?—you cannot: you *must* not!"

Loftus Vaughan would have spoken more gracefully had he omitted the last phrase. It had the sound of a command, with an implied threat; and, jarring upon the ear of her to whom it was addressed, might have roused a spirit of rebellion. It is just possible that such would have been its effect, had it been spoken on the evening before the Smythje ball, instead of the morning after.

The incidents occurring there had extinguished all hope in the breast of the young creole that she should ever share happiness with Herbert Vaughan—had, at the same time, destroyed any thought of resistance to the will of her father; and, with a sort of apathetic despair, she submitted herself to the sacrifice which her father had determined she should make.

"I have told you the truth," said she, gazing fixedly in his face, as if to impress him with the idleness of the arguments he had been using. "I cannot give Mr. Smythje my heart; I shall tell *him* the same."

"No—no!" hastily rejoined the importunate parent; "you must do nothing of the

kind. Give him your hand; and say nothing about your heart. That you can bestow afterwards—when you are safe married."

"Never, never!" said the young girl, sighing sadly as she spoke. "I cannot practise that deception. No, father, not even for you. Mr. Smythje shall know all; and, if he choose to accept my hand without my heart——"

"Then you promise to give him your hand?" interrupted the Custos, overjoyed at this hypothetical consent.

"It is *you* who give it; not *I*, father."

"Enough!" cried Mr. Vaughan, hastily turning his eyes to the garden, as if to search for the insect-hunter. "I *shall* give it," continued he, "and this very minute. Mr. Smythje!"

Smythje, standing close by the kiosk, on the *qui vive* of expectation, promptly responded to the summons; and in two seconds of time appeared in the open doorway.

"Mr. Smythje—sir!" said the Custos, putting on an air of pompous solemnity befitting the occasion; "you have asked for my daughter's hand in marriage; and, sir, I am happy to inform you that she has consented

to your becoming my son-in-law. I am proud of the honour, sir."

Here Mr. Vaughan paused to get breath.

"Aw, aw!" stammered Smythje. "This is a gweat happiness—veway gweat, indeed! Quite unexpected!—aw, aw!—I am shure, Miss Vawn, I never dweamt such happiness was in store faw me."

"Now, my children," playfully interrupted the Custos—covering Smythje's embarrassment by the interruption—"I have bestowed you upon one another; and, with my blessing, I leave you to yourselves."

So saying, the gratified father stepped forth from the kiosk; and, wending his way along the walk, disappeared around an angle of the house.

We shall not intrude upon the lovers thus left alone, nor repeat a single word of what passed between them.

Suffice it to say, that when Smythje came out of that same kiosk, his air was rather tranquil than triumphant. A portion of the shadow that had been observed upon Kate's countenance seemed to have been transmitted to his.

"Well?" anxiously inquired the intended father-in-law.

"Aw! all wight; betwothed. Vewy stwange, thaw—inexpwicably stwange!"

"How, strange?" demanded Mr. Vaughan.

"Aw, vewy mild. I expected haw to go into hystewics. Ba Jawve! naw: she weceived ma declawation as cool as a cucumbaw!"

She had done more than that; she had given him a hand without a heart.

And Smythje knew it; for Kate Vaughan had kept her promise.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DUPPY'S HOLE.

On the flank of the "Mountain" that frowned towards the Happy Valley, and not far from the Jumbé Rock, a spring gushed forth. So copious was it as to merit the name of fountain. In its descent down the slope it was joined by others, and soon became a torrent—leaping from ledge to ledge, and foaming as it followed its onward course.

About half-way between the summit and base of the mountain, a deep longitudinal hollow lay in its track—into which the stream was precipitated, in a clear, curving cascade.

This singular hollow resembled the crater of an extinct volcano—in the circumstance that on all sides it was surrounded by a precipice facing inward, and rising two hundred feet sheer from the level below. It was not of circular shape, however—as craters generally are—but of the form of a ship, the stream falling

in over the poop, and afterwards escaping through a narrow cleft at the bow.

Preserving the simile of a ship, it may be stated that the channel ran directly fore and aft, bisecting the bottom of the valley, an area of several acres, into two equal parts—but in consequence of an obstruction at its exit, the stream formed a lagoon, or dam, flooding the whole of the fore-deck, while the main and quarter-decks were covered with a growth of indigenous timber-trees, of appearance primeval.

The water, on leaving the lagoon, made its escape below, through a gorge black and narrow, bounded on each side by the same beetling cliffs that surrounded the valley. At the lower end of this gorge was a second waterfall, where the stream again pitched over a precipice of several hundred feet in height; and thence traversing the slope of the mountain, ended in becoming a tributary of the Montego River.

The upper cascade precipitated itself upon a bed of grim black boulders; through the midst of which the froth-crested water seethed swiftly onward to the lagoon below.

Above these boulders hung continuously a

cloud of white vapour, like steam ascending out of some gigantic cauldron.

When the sun was upon that side of the mountain, an iris might be seen shining amidst the fleece-like vapour. But rare was the eye that beheld this beautiful phenomenon: for the Duppy's Hole—in negro parlance, the appellation of the place—shared the reputation of the Jumbé Rock; and few were the negroes who would have ventured to approach, even to the edge of this cavernous abysm: fewer those who would have dared to descend into it.

Indeed, something more than superstitious terror might have hindered the execution of this last project: since a descent into the Duppy's Hole appeared an impossibility. Down the beetling cliffs that encompassed it, there was neither path, nor pass—not a ledge on which the foot might have rested with safety. Only at one point—and that where the precipice rose over the lagoon—might a descent have been made: by means of some stunted trees that, rooting in the clefts of the rock, formed a straggling screen up the face of the cliff. At this point an agile individual might possibly have scrambled down;

but the dammed water—dark and deep—would have hindered him from reaching the quarter-deck of this ship-shaped ravine, unless by swimming; and this, the suck of the current towards the gorge below would have rendered a most perilous performance.

It was evident that some one had tempted this peril: for on scrutinizing the straggling trees upon the cliff, a sort of stairway could be distinguished—the outstanding stems serving as steps, with the parasitical creepers connecting them together.

Moreover, at certain times, a tiny string of smoke might have been seen ascending out of the Duppy's Hole; which, after curling diffusely over the tops of the tall trees, would dissolve itself, and become invisible. Only one standing upon the cliff above, and parting the foliage that screened it to its very brink, could have seen this smoke; and, if only superficially observed, it might easily have been mistaken for a stray waif of the fog that floated above the waterfall near which it rose. Closely scrutinized, however, its blue colour and soft filmy haze rendered it recognizable as the smoke of a wood fire, and one that must have been made by human hands.

Any day might it have been seen, and three times a-day—at morning, noon, and evening—as if the fire had been kindled for the purposes of cooking the three regular meals of breakfast, dinner, and supper.

The diurnal appearance of this smoke proved the presence of a human being within the Duppy's Hole. One, at least, disregarding the superstitious terror attached to the place, had made it his home.

By exploring the valley, other evidences of human presence might have been found. Under the branches of a large tree, standing by the edge of the lagoon, and from which the silvery tillandsia fell in festoons to the surface of the water, a small canoe of rude construction could be seen, a foot or two of its stem protruding from the moss. A piece of twisted withe, attaching it to the tree, told that it had not drifted there by accident, but was moored by some one who meant to return to it.

From the edge of the lagoon to the upper end of the valley, the ground, as already stated, was covered with a thick growth of forest timber—where the eye of the botanical observer might distinguish, by their forms and foliage, many of those magnificent

indigenous trees for which the *sylva* of Jamaica has long been celebrated.

There stood the gigantic cedrela, and its kindred the bastard cedar, with elm-like leaves; the mountain mahoe; the "tropic birch"; and the world-known mahogany.

Here and there, the lance-like culms of bamboos might be seen shooting up over the tops of the dicotyledons, or forming a fringe along the cliffs above, intermingled with trumpet-trees, with their singular peltate leaves, and tall tree-ferns, whose delicate lace-like fronds formed a netted tracery against the blue background of the sky. In the rich soil of the valley flourished luxuriantly the noble cabbage-palm—the *prince* of the Jamaica forest—while, by its side, claiming admiration for the massive grandeur of its form, stood the *patriarch* of West-Indian trees—the grand *ceiba;* the hoary Spanish moss that drooped from its spreading branches forming an appropriate beard for this venerable giant.

Every tree had its parasites—not a single species, but in hundreds, and of as many grotesque shapes; some twining around the trunks and boughs like huge snakes or cables—some seated upon the limbs or in the forking of the

branches; and others hanging suspended from the topmost twigs, like streamers from the rigging of a ship. Many of these, trailing from tree to tree, were loaded with clusters of the most brilliant flowers, thus uniting the forest into one continuous arbour.

Close under the cliff, and near where the cascade came tumbling down from the rocks, stood a tree that deserves particular mention. It was a *ceiba* of enormous dimensions, with a buttressed trunk, that covered a surface of more than fifty feet in diameter. Its vast bole, rising nearly to the brow of the cliff, extended horizontally over an area on which five hundred men could have conveniently encamped; while the profuse growth of Spanish moss clustering upon its branches, rather than its own sparse foliage, would have shaded them from the sun, completely shutting out the view overhead.

Not from any of these circumstances was the tree distinguished from others of its kind frequently met with in the mountain forests of Jamaica. What rendered it distinct from those around was, that between two of the great spurs extending outwards from its trunk, an

object appeared which indicated the presence of man.

This object was a hut constructed in the most simple fashion—having for its side walls the plate-like buttresses already mentioned, while in front a stockade of bamboo stems completed the inclosure. In the centre of the stockade a narrow space had been left open for the entrance—which could be closed, when occasion required, by a door of split bamboos that hung lightly upon its hinges of withe.

In front, the roof trended downward from the main trunk of the tree—following the slope of the spurs to a height of some six feet from the ground. Its construction was of the simplest kind—being only a few poles laid transversely, and over these a thatch of the long pinnate leaves of the cabbage-palm.

The hut inside was of triangular shape, and of no inconsiderable size—since the converging spurs forming its side walls extended full twelve feet outwards from the tree. No doubt it was large enough for whoever occupied it; and the platform of bamboo canes, intended as a bedstead, from its narrowness showed that

only one person was accustomed to pass the night under the shelter of its roof.

That this person was a man could be told by the presence of some articles of male attire lying upon this rude couch—where also lay a strip of coarse rush matting, and an old, tattered blanket—evidently the sole stock of bedding which the hut contained.

The furniture was scanty as simple. The cane platform already mentioned appeared to do duty also as a table and chair; and, with the exception of an old tin kettle, some calabash bowls and platters, nothing else could be seen that might be termed an "utensil."

There were articles, however, of a different character, and plenty of them; but these were neither simple nor their uses easily understood.

Against the walls hung a variety of singular objects—some of them of ludicrous and some of horrid aspect. Among the latter could be observed the skin of the dreaded galliwasp; the two-headed snake; the skull and tusks of a savage boar; dried specimens of the ugly gecko lizard; enormous bats, with human-like faces; and other like hideous creatures.

Little bags, suspended from the rafters,

contained articles of still more mysterious import. Balls of whitish-coloured clay; the claws of the great-eared owl; parrots' beaks and feathers; the teeth of cats, alligators, and the native agouti; pieces of rag and broken glass; with a score of like odds and ends, forming a medley as miscellaneous as unintelligible.

In one corner was a wicker basket—the cutacoo—filled with roots and plants of several different species, among which might be identified the dangerous dumb-cane; the savanna flower; and other "simples" of a suspicious character.

Entering this hut, and observing the singular collection of specimens which it contained, a stranger to the Island of Jamaica would have been puzzled to explain their presence and purpose. Not so, one acquainted with the forms of the serpent worship of Ethiopia—the creed of the Coromantees. The grotesque objects were but symbols of the African *fetisch*. The hut was a temple of Obi: in plainer terms, the dwelling of an *Obeah man*.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAKRA, THE MYAL-MAN.

THE sun was just going down to his bed in the blue Caribbean, and tinting with a carmine-coloured light the glistening surface of the Jumbé Rock, when a human figure was seen ascending the mountain path that led to that noted summit.

Notwithstanding the gloom of the indigenous forest—every moment becoming more obscure under the fast-deepening twilight—it could be easily seen that the figure was that of a woman; while the buff complexion of her face and naked throat, of her gloveless hands, and shoeless and stockingless feet and ankles, proclaimed her a woman of colour—a mulatta.

Her costume was in keeping with her caste. A frock of cotton print of flaunting pattern, half open at the breast: a toque of Madras kerchief of gaudy hues—these were all she wore, excepting the chemise of scarcely white

calico, whose embroidered border showed through the opening of her dress.

She was a woman of large form, and bold, passionate physiognomy; possessing a countenance not altogether unlovely, though lacking in delicacy of feature—its beauty, such as it was, being of a purely sensual character.

Whatever errand she was on, both her step and glance bespoke courageous resolve. It argued courage—her being upon the "Mountain," and so near the Jumbé Rock, at that unusual hour.

But there are passions stronger than fear. Even the terror of the supernatural fades from the heart that is benighted with love, or wrung by jealousy. Perhaps this lone wanderer of the forest path was the victim of one or the other?

A certain expression of nervous anxiety—at times becoming more anguished—would have argued the latter to be the passion which was uppermost in her mind. Love should have looked more gentle and hopeful.

Though it was evident that her errand was not one of ordinary business, there was nothing about her to betray its exact purpose. A basket of palm wickerwork, suspended over her

wrist, appeared to be filled with provisions: the half-closed lid permitting to be seen inside a congeries of yams, plaintains, tomatoes, and capsicums; while the legs of a guinea-fowl protruded from the opening.

This might have argued a certain purpose —an errand to market; but the unusual hour, the direction taken, and, above all, the air and bearing of the mulatta, as she strode up the mountain path, forbade the supposition that she was going to market. The Jumbé Rock was not a likely place to find sale for a basket of provisions.

After all, she was not bound thither. On arriving within sight of the summit, she paused upon the path; and, after looking around for a minute or two—as if making a reconnoissance—she faced to the left, and advanced diagonally across the flank of the mountain.

Her turning aside from the Jumbé Rock could not have been from fear: for the direction she was now following would carry her to a place equally dreaded by the superstitious—the Duppy's Hole.

That she was proceeding to this place was evident. There was no distinct path leading

thither, but the directness of her course, and the confidence with which she kept it, told that she must have gone over the ground before.

Forcing her way through the tangle of vines and branches, she strode courageously onward—until at length she arrived on the edge of the cliff that hemmed in the cavernous hollow.

The point where she reached it was just above the gorge—the place where the tree stairway led down to the lagoon.

From her actions, it was evident that the way was known to her; and that she meditated a descent into the bottom of the valley.

That she knew she could accomplish this feat of herself, and expected some one to come to her assistance, was also evident from her proceeding to make a signal as soon as she arrived upon the edge of the cliff.

Drawing from the bosom of her dress a small white kerchief, she spread it open upon the branch of a tree that grew conspicuously over the precipice; and then, resting her hand against the trunk, she stood gazing with a fixed and earnest look upon the water below.

In the twilight, now fast darkening down,

even the white kerchief might have remained unnoticed. The woman, however, appeared to have no apprehension upon this head. Her gaze was expectant and full of confidence: as if the signal had been a preconcerted one, and she was conscious that the individual for whom it was intended would be on the look-out.

Forewarned or not, she was not disappointed. Scarce five minutes had transpired from the hanging out of the handkerchief, when a canoe was seen shooting out from under the moss-garnished trees that fringed the upper edge of the lagoon, and making for the bottom of the cliff beneath the spot where she stood.

A single individual occupied the canoe; who, even under the sombre shadow of the twilight, appeared to be a man of dread aspect.

He was a negro of gigantic size; though that might not have appeared as he sat squatted in the canoe but for the extreme breadth of his shoulders, between which was set a huge head, almost neckless. His back was bent like a bow, presenting an enormous hunch—partly the effect of advanced age, and partly from natural malformation. His attitude in the canoe gave him a double stoop: so that, as he leant forward to the paddle, his face was

turned downward, as if he was regarding some object in the bottom of the craft. His long, ape-like arms enabled him to reach over the gunwale without bending much to either side; and only with these did he appear to make any exertion—his body remaining perfectly immobile.

The dress of this individual was at the same time grotesque and savage. The only part of it which belonged to civilized fashion was a pair of wide trousers or drawers, of coarse Osnaburgh linen—such as are worn by the field hands on a sugar plantation. Their dirty yellowish hue told that they had long been strangers to the laundry: while several crimson-coloured blotches upon them proclaimed that their last wetting had been with blood, not water.

A sort of *kaross*, or cloak, made out of the skins of the *utia*, and hung over his shoulders, was the only other garment he wore. This, fastened round his thick, short neck by a piece of leathern thong, covered the whole of his body down to the hams—the Osnaburgh drawers continuing the costume thence to his ankles.

His feet were bare. Nor needed they

any protection from shoes—the soles being thickly covered with a horn-like callosity, which extended from the ball of the great toe to the broad heel, far protruding backward.

The head-dress was equally *bizarre*. It was a sort of cap, constructed out of the skin of some wild animal; and fitting closely, exhibited, in all its phrenological fulness, the huge negro cranium which it covered. There was no brim; but, in its place, the dried and stuffed skin of the great yellow snake was wreathed around the temples—with the head of the reptile in front, and two sparkling pebbles set in the sockets of its eyes to give it the appearance of life!

The countenance of the negro did not need this terrific adornment to inspire those who beheld it with fear. The sullen glare of his deep-set eye balls; the broad, gaping nostrils; the teeth, filed to a point, and gleaming, shark-like, behind his purple lips; the red tattooing upon his cheeks and broad breast—the latter exposed by the action of his arms—all combined in making a picture that needed no reptiliform addition to render it hideous enough for the most horrid of purposes. It seemed to terrify even the wild denizens of

the Duppy's Hole. The heron, couching in the sedge, flapped up with an affrighted cry; and the flamingo, spreading her scarlet wings, rose screaming over the cliffs, and flew far away.

Even the woman who awaited him—bold as she may have been, and voluntary as her rendezvous appeared to be—could not help shuddering as the canoe drew near; and for a moment she appeared irresolute, as to whether she should trust herself in such uncanny company.

Her resolution, however, stimulated by some strong passion, soon returned; and as the canoe swept in among the bushes at the bottom of the cliff, and she heard the voice of its occupant, summoning her to descend, she plucked the signal from the tree, fixed the basket firmly over her arm, and commenced letting herself down through the tangle of branches.

The canoe re-appeared upon the open water, returning across the lagoon. The mulatta woman was seated in the stern, the man, as before, plying the paddle, but now exerting all his strength to prevent the light craft from being carried down by the current, that could

be heard hissing and groaning through the gorge below.

On getting back under the tree from which he had started, the negro corded the canoe to one of the branches; and then, scrambling upon shore, followed by the woman, he walked on towards the temple of Obi—of which he was himself both oracle and priest.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RESURRECTION.

ARRIVED at the cotton-tree hut, the myal-man —for such was the negro—dived at once into the open door, his broad and hunched shoulders scarce clearing the aperture.

In a tone rather of command than request he directed the woman to enter.

The mulatta appeared to hesitate. Inside, the place was dark as Erebus: though without it was not very different. The shadow of the *ceiba*, with its dense shrouding of moss, interrupted every ray of the moonlight now glistening among the tops of the trees.

The negro noticed her hesitation.

"Come in!" cried he, repeating his command in the same gruff voice. "You me sabbey—what fo' you fear?"

"I'se not afraid, Chakra," replied the woman, though the trembling of her voice contradicted the assertion; "only," she added, still hesitating, "it's so dark in there."

"Well, den—you 'tay outside," said the other, relenting; "you 'tay dar wha you is; a soon 'trike a light."

A fumbling was heard, and then the chink of steel against flint, followed by fiery sparks.

A piece of punk was set a-blaze, and from this the flame was communicated to a sort of lamp, composed of the *carapace* of a turtle, filled with wild-hog's lard, and having a wick twisted out of the down of the cotton-tree.

"Now you come in, Cynthy," resumed the negro, placing the lamp upon the floor. "Wha! you 'till afeard! You de dauter ob Juno Vagh'n—you modder no fear ole Chakra. Whugh! shé no fear de Debbil!"

Cynthia, thus addressed, might have thought that between the dread of these two personages there was not much to choose: for the Devil himself could hardly have appeared in more hideous guise than the human being who stood before her.

"O Chakra!" said she, as shé stepped inside the door, and caught sight of the weird-looking garniture of the walls; "woman may well be 'fraid. 'Dis am a fearful place!"

"Not so fearful as de Jumbé Rock," was the reply of the myal-man, accompanied by a

significant glance, and something between a smile and a grin.

"True!" said the mulatta, gradually recovering her self-possession; "true: you hab cause say so, Chakra."

"Das a fac', Cynthy."

"But tell me, good Chakra," continued the mulatta, giving way to a woman's feeling—curiosity, "how did you ebber 'scape from the Jumbé Rock? The folks said it was your skeleton dat was up there—chain to de palm-tree!"

"De folk 'peek da troof. My 'keleton it was, jess as dey say."

The woman turned upon the speaker a glance in which astonishment was mingled with fear, the latter predominating.

"*Your* skeleton?" she muttered, interrogatively.

"Dem same old bones—de 'kull, de ribs, de jeints, drumticks, an' all. Goily, gal Cynthy! dat ere 'pears 'stonish you. Wha fo'? Nuffin in daat. You sabbey ole Chakra? You know he *myal-man?* Doan care who know *now*—so long dey b'lieve um dead. Wha for myal-man, ef he no bring de dead to life 'gain? Be shoo Chakra no die hisseff, so long he knows how

bring dead body to de life. Ole Chakra know all dat. Dey no kill *him*, nebber! Neider de white folk nor de brack folk. Dey may shoot 'im wid 'gun—dey may hang 'im by de neck—dey may cut off 'im head—he come to life 'gain, like de blue lizard and de glass snake. Dey *did* try kill 'im, you know. Dey 'tarve him till he die ob hunger and thuss. De John Crow pick out him eyes, and tear de flesh from de old nigga's body—leab nuffin but de bare bones! Ha! Chakra 'lib yet—he hab new bones, new flesh! Golly! you him see? he 'trong—he fat as ebber he wa'! Ha! ha! ha!"

And as the hideous negro uttered his exulting laugh, he threw up his arms and turned his eyes towards his own person, as if appealing to it for proof of the resurrection he professed to have accomplished!

The woman looked as if petrified by the recital; every word of which she appeared implicitly to believe. She was too much terrified to speak, and remained silent, apparently cowering under the influence of a supernatural awe.

The myal-man perceived the advantage he had gained; and seeing that the curiosity of

his listener was satisfied—for she had not the slightest desire to hear more about that matter —he adroitly changed the subject to one of a more natural character.

"You've brought de basket ob wittle, Cynthy?"

"Yes, Chakra—there."

"Golly! um's berry good—guinea-hen an' plenty ob vegable fo' de pepperpot. Anything fo' drink, gal? Habent forgot daat, a hope? De drink am da mose partickla ob all."

"I have not forgotten it, Chakra. There's a bottle of rum. You'll find it in the bottom of the basket. I had a deal trouble steal it."

"Who you 'teal 'im from?"

"Why, master: who else? He have grown berry partickler of late—carries all de keys himself; and won't let us coloured folk go near de storeroom, as if we were all teevin' cats!"

"Nebba mind—nebba you mind, Cynthy—maybe Chakra watch *him* by'm-bye. Wa, now!" added he, drawing the bottle of rum out of the basket, and holding it up to the light. "De buckra preacher he say dat 'tolen

water am sweet. A 'pose dat 'tolen rum folla de same excepshun. A see ef um do."

So saying, the negro drew out the stopper; raised the bottle to his lips; and buried the neck up to the swell between his capacious jaws.

A series of "clucks" proclaimed the passage of the liquor over his palate; and not until he had swallowed half a pint of the fiery fluid, did he withdraw the neck of the bottle from between his teeth.

"Whugh!" he exclaimed, with an aspirate that resembled the snort of a startled hog. "Whugh!" he repeated, stroking his abdomen with his huge paw. "De buckra preacher may talk 'bout him 'tolen water, but gib me de 'tolen rum. You good gal, Cynthy—you berry good gal, fo' fetch ole Chakra dis nice basket o' wittle—he sometime berry hungry—he need um all."

"I promise to bring more—whenebber I can get away from the Buff."

"Das right, my picaninny! An' now, gal," continued he, changing his tone, and regarding the mulatta with a look of interrogation, "wha fo' you want see me dis night? You

hab some puppos partickla? Dat so—eh, gal?"

The mulatta stood hesitating. There are certain secrets which woman avows with reluctance—often with repugnance. Her love is one; and of this she cares to make confession only to him who has the right to hear it. Hence Cynthia's silent and hesitating attitude.

"Wha fo' you no 'peak?" asked the grim confessor. "Shoo' you no hab fear ob ole Chakra? You no need fo' tell 'im—he know you secret a'ready—you lub Cubina, de capen ob Maroon? Dat troof, eh?"

"It is true, Chakra. I shall conceal nothing from you."

"Better not, 'cause you can't 'ceal nuffin from ole Chakra—he know ebbery ting—little bird tell um. Wa now, wha nex'? You tink Cubina no lub you?"

"Ah! I am sure of it," replied the mulatta, her bold countenance relaxing into an anguished expression. "I once thought he love me. Now I no think so."

"You tink him lub some odder gal?"

"I am sure of it—Oh, I have reason!"

"Who am dis odder?"

"Yola."

"Yola? Dat ere name sound new to me. Whar d's she 'long to?"

"She belongs to Mount Welcome—she Missa Kate's maid."

"Lilly Quasheba, *I* 'call dat young lady," muttered the myal-man, with a knowing grin. "But dis Yola?" he added; "whar she come from? A nebber hear de name afo'."

"Oh, true, Chakra! I did not think of tellin' you. She was bought from the Jew, and fetched home since you—that is, after you left the plantation."

"Arter I lef' de plantation to die on de Jumbé Rock; ha! ha! ha! Dat's wha you mean, Cynthy?"

"Yes—she came soon after."

"So you tink Cubina lub *her?*"

"I do."

"An' she 'ciprocate de fekshun?"

"Ah, surely! How could she help do that?"

The interrogatory betrayed the speaker's belief that the Maroon captain was irresistible.

"Wa, then—wha you want me do, gal?

You want rebbenge on Cubina, 'cause he hab 'trayed you? You want me put de *death-'pell* on him?"

"Oh! no—no! not that, Chakra, for the love of Heaven!—not that!"

"Den you want de *lub-spell?*"

"Ah! if he could be make love me 'gain—he did once. That is—I thought he did. Is it possible, good Chakra, to make him love me again?"

"All ting possble to old Chakra; an' to prove dat," continued he, with a determined air, "he promise put de lub-spell on Cubina."

"Oh, thanks! thanks!" cried the woman, stretching out her hands, and speaking in a tone of fervent gratitude. "What can I do for you, Chakra? I bring you everything you ask. I steal rum—I steal wine—I come every night with something you like eat."

"Wa, Cynthy—dat berry kind ob you; but you muss do more dan all dat."

"Anything you ask me—what more?"

"You must yourseff help in de spell. It take bof you an' me to bring dat 'bout."

"Only me tell what to do; and, trust me, Chakra, I shall follow your advice."

"Wa, den—lissen—I tell you all 'bout it.

But sit down on da bedsed dar. It take some time."

The woman, thus directed, took her seat upon the bamboo couch, and remained silent and attentive—watching every movement of her hideous companion, and not without some misgivings as to the compact which was about to be entered into between them.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LOVE-SPELL.

THE countenance of the myal-man had assumed an air of solemnity that betokened serious determination; and the mulatta felt a presentiment that, in return for his services, something was about to be demanded of her—something more than a payment in meat and drink.

His mysterious behaviour as he passed around the hut; now stopping before one of the grotesque objects that adorned the wall,—now fumbling among the little bags and baskets, as if in search of some particular charm—his movements made in solemn silence only broken by the melancholy sighing of the cataract without; all this was producing on the mind of the mulatta an unpleasant impression; and, despite her natural courage, sustained as it was by the burning passion that devoured her, she was fast giving way to an indefinable fear.

The priest of Obi, after appearing to have worshipped each *fetisch* in turn, at length transferred his devotions to the rum-bottle—perhaps the most potent god in his whole Pantheon. Taking another long-protracted potation, followed by the customary "Whugh!" he restored the bottle to its place; and then, seating himself upon a huge turtle-shell, that formed part of the plenishing of his temple, he commenced giving his devotee her lesson of instructions.

"Fuss, den," said he, "to put de lub-spell on anybody—eider a man or a woman—it am nessary, at de same time, to hab de *obeah*-spell go 'long wi' it."

"What!" exclaimed his listener, exhibiting a degree of alarm; "the *obeah*-spell?—on Cubina, do you mean?"

"No, not on *him*—dat's not a nessary consarquence. But 'fore Cubina be made lub you, someb'dy else muss be made *sick*."

"Who?" quickly inquired the mulatta, her mind at the moment reverting to one whom she might have wished to be the invalid.

"Who you tink fo'? who you greatest enemy you wish make sick?"

"Yola," answered the woman, in a low

muttered voice, and with only a moment of hesitation.

"Woan do—woman woan do—muss be man; an' more dan dat, muss be free man. Nigga slave woan do. Obi god tell me so jess now. Buckra man, too, it muss be. If buckra man hab de obeah-'pell, Cubina he take de lub-spell 'trong—he lub you hard as a ole mule can kick."

"Oh! if he would!" exclaimed the passionate mulatta, in an ecstasy of delightful expectation; "I shall do anything for that—anything!"

"Den you muss help put de obeah-spell on some ob de white folk. You hab buckra enemy?—Chakra hab de same."

"Who?" inquired the woman, reflectingly.

"Who! No need tell who Chakra enemy—you enemy too. Who fooled you long time 'go? who 'bused you when you wa' young gal? No need tell you dat, Cynthy Vagh'n?"

The mulatta turned her eyes upon the speaker with a significant expression. Some old memory seemed resuscitated by his words,—evidently anything but a pleasant one.

"Massa Loftus?" she said, in a half-whisper.

"Sartin shoo, Massa Loftus—dat ere buckra you enemy an' mine boaf."

"And you would——?"

"Set de obeah fo' him," said the negro, finishing the interrogatory, which the other had hesitated to pronounce.

The woman remained without making answer, and as if buried in reflection. The expression upon her features was not one of repentance.

"Muss be him!" continued the tempter, as if to win her more completely to his dark project; "no odder do so well. Obi god say so—muss be de planter ob Moun' Welc'm."

"If Cubina will but love me, I care not who," rejoined the mulatta, with an air of reckless determination.

"'Nuff sed," resumed the myal-man. "De obeah-spell sha' be set on de proud buckra, Loffus Vagh'n; an' you, Cynthy, muss 'sist in de workin' ob de charm."

"How can I assist?" inquired the woman, in a voice whose trembling told of a slight irresolution. "How, Chakra?"

"Dat you be tole by'm-by—not dis night. De 'pell take time. God Obi he no act all at once, not eben fo' ole Chakra. You come 'gain

when I leab de signal fo' you on de trumpet-tree. Till den you keep dark 'bout all dese ting. You one ob de few dat know ole Chakra still 'live. Odders know ob de ole myal-man in de mask, but berry few ebber see um face, an' nebba suspeck who um be. Das all right. You tell who de myal-man am, den——"

"Oh, never, Chakra," interrupted his listener, "never!"

"No, berra not. You tell dat, Cynthy, you soon feel de obeah-spell on youseff.

"Now, gal," continued the negro, rising from his seat, and motioning the mulatta to do the same, "time fo' you go. I specks one odder soon: no do fo' you to be cotch hya when dat odder come. Take you basket, an' folla me."

So saying, he emptied the basket of its heterogeneous contents; and, handing it to its owner, conducted her out of the hut.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAKRA REDIVIVUS.

THE scene that had thus transpired in the depths of the Duppy's Hole requires some explanation. The dialogue which Cynthia had held with the hideous Coromantee, though couched in ambiguous phrase, clearly indicated an intention to assassinate the Custos Vaughan; and by a mode which these arch-conspirators figuratively—almost facetiously—termed the *obeah-spell!*

In the diabolical design, the woman appeared to be acting rather as coadjutor than conspirator; and her motive for taking part in the plot, though wicked enough, presents, in the language of French law, one or two "extenuating circumstances."

A word or two of the mulatta's history will make her motive understood, though her conversation may have already declared it with sufficient distinctness.

Cynthia was a slave on the plantation of

Mount Welcome—one of the house-wenches, or domestics belonging to the mansion; and of which, in a large establishment like that of Custos Vaughan, there is usually a numerous troop.

The girl, in earlier life, had been gifted with good looks. Nor could it be said that they were yet gone; though hers was a beauty that no longer presented the charm of innocent girlhood, but rather the sensualistic attractions of a bold and abandoned woman.

Had Cynthia been other than a slave—that is, had she lived in other lands—her story might have been different. But in that, her native country—and under conditions of bondage that extended alike to body and soul—her fair looks had proved only a fatal gift.

With no motive to tread the paths of virtue—with a thousand temptations to stray from it—Cynthia, like, it is sad to think, too many of her race, had wandered into ways of wantonness. It might be, as Chakra had obscurely hinted, that the slave had been abused. Wherever lay the blame, she had, at all events, become abandoned.

Whether loving them or not, Cynthia had, in her time, been honoured with more than

one admirer. But there was one on whom she had at length fixed her affections—or, more properly, her passions—to a degree of permanence that promised to end only with her life. This one was the young Maroon captain, Cubina; and although it was a love of comparatively recent origin, it had already reached the extreme of passion. So fierce and reckless had it grown, on the part of the wretched woman, that she was ready for anything that promised to procure her its requital—ready even for the nefarious purpose of Chakra.

To do Cubina justice, this love of the slave Cynthia was not reciprocated. To the levities and light speeches habitually indulged in by the Maroons, in their intercourse with the plantation people, Cubina was a singular exception; and Cynthia's statement that he had once returned her love—somewhat doubtingly delivered—had no other foundation than her own groundless conjectures, in which the wish was father to the thought.

Some friendly words may have passed between the Maroon and mulatta—for they had often met upon their mutual wanderings; but the latter, in mistaking them for words

of love, had, sadly for herself, misconceived their meaning.

Of late her passion had become fiercer than ever—since jealousy had arisen to stimulate it —jealousy of Cubina with Yola. The meeting and subsequent correspondence of the Maroon with the Foolah maiden were events of still more recent date; but already had Cynthia seen or heard enough to produce the conviction that in Yola she had found a rival. With the passionate *sang-mêlé*, jealousy pointed to revenge; and she had begun to indulge in dark projects of this nature just at that time when Chakra chanced to throw his shadow across her path.

Cynthia was one of those slaves, known as *night-rangers*. She was in the habit of making occasional and nocturnal excursions through the woods for many purposes; but of late, principally in the hope of meeting Cubina, and satisfying herself in regard to a suspicion she had conceived of meetings occurring between him and Yola.

In one of these expeditions she had encountered a man whose appearance filled her with terror; and very naturally: since, as she at first supposed, it was not a *man*, but a *ghost*

that she saw—the ghost of Chakra, the myal-man!

That it was the "duppy" of old Chakra, Cynthia on sight firmly believed; and might have continued longer in that belief, had she been permitted to make her escape from the spot—as she was fast hastening to do. But the long, ape-like arms of the myal-man, flung around her on the instant, restrained her flight until she became convinced that it was not Chakra's ghost, but Chakra himself, who had so rudely embraced her!

It was not altogether by chance this encounter had occurred—at least, on the part of Chakra. He had been looking out for Cynthia for some time before. He wanted her for a purpose.

The mulatta made no revelation of what she had seen. With all his ugliness, the myal-man had been the friend of her mother—had often dandled her, Cynthia, upon his knees. But the tongue of Juno's daughter was held silent by stronger ties than those of affection. Fear was one; but there was also another. If Chakra wanted Cynthia for a purpose, a quick instinct told her she might stand in need of *him*. He was just the instrument by

which to accomplish that revenge of which she was already dreaming.

On the instant, mulatta and myal-man became allies.

This mutual confidence had been but very recently established—only a few days, or rather nights, before that on which Cynthia had given Chakra this, her first *séance* in the temple of Obi.

The purpose for which the myal-man wanted the mulatta—or one purpose, at least—has been sufficiently set forth in the dialogues occurring between them. He required her assistance to put the obeah-spell upon the planter, Loftus Vaughan. The character of Cynthia, which Chakra well understood—with the opportunities she had, in her capacity of housemaid—promised to provide the assassin with an agency of the most effective kind; and the pretended love-spell he was to work upon Cubina had given him a talisman, by which his agent was but too easily induced to undertake the execution of his diabolical design.

Among many other performances of a like kind, it was part of Chakra's programme, some day or other, to put the death-spell upon the

Maroon himself; to "obeah" young Cubina —as it was suspected he had the old Cubina, the father—after twenty years of tentation. It was but the want of opportunity that had hindered him from having long before accomplished his nefarious project upon the son, as upon the father—in satisfaction of a revenge so old as to be anterior to the birth of Cubina himself, though associated with that event.

Of course, this design was not revealed to Cynthia.

His motive for conspiring the death of Loftus Vaughan was without any mystery whatever; and this—perhaps more than any other of his crimes, either purposed or committed—might plead "extenuating circumstances." His cruel condemnation, and subsequent exposure upon the Jumbé Rock, was a stimulus sufficient to have excited to revenge a gentler nature than that of Chakra, the Coromantee. It need scarce be said that it had stimulated his to the deadliest degree.

The resurrection of the myal-man may appear a mystery—as it did to the slave, Cynthia. There was one individual, however, who understood its character. Not to an African god

was the priest of Obi indebted for his resuscitation, but to an Israelitish man—to Jacob Jessuron.

It was but a simple trick—that of substituting a carcase—afterwards to become a skeleton—for the presumed dead body of the myalman. The baracoon of the slave-merchant generally had such a commodity in stock. If not, Jessuron would not have scrupled to manufacture one for the occasion.

Humanity had nothing to do in the supplying of this proxy. Had there been no other motive than that to actuate the Jew, Chakra might have rotted under the shadow of the cabbage-palm.

But Jessuron had his purpose for saving the life of the condemned criminal—more than one, perhaps—and he had saved it.

Since his *resurrection,* Chakra had pursued his iniquitous calling with even more energy than of old; but now in the most secret and surreptitious manner.

He had not been long in re-establishing a system of confederates—under the auspices of a new name—but only at night, and with disguised form and masked face, did he give his clients rendezvous. Never in the Duppy's

Hole; for few were sufficiently initiated into the mysteries of myalism to be introduced to its temple in that secure retreat.

Although the confederates of the obeah-man rarely reveal the secret of his whereabouts—even his *victims dreading to divulge it*—Chakra knew the necessity of keeping as much as possible *en perdu;* and no outlaw, with halter around his neck, could have been more cautious in his outgoings and incomings.

He knew that his life was forfeit on the old judgment; and, though he had once escaped execution, he might not be so fortunate upon a second occasion. If recaptured, some surer mode of death would be provided—a rope, instead of a chain; and in place of being fastened to the trunk of a tree, he would be pretty certain of being suspended by the neck to the branch of one.

Knowing all this, Chakra *redivivus* trod the forest paths with caution, and was especially shy of the plantation of Mount Welcome. Around the sides of the mountain he had little to fear. The reputation of the Jumbé Rock, as well as that of the Duppy's Hole, kept the proximity of these noted places clear of all

dark-skinned stragglers; and there Chakra had the beat to himself.

Upon dark nights, however, like the wolf, he could prowl at pleasure and with comparative safety—especially upon the outskirts of the more remote plantations: the little intercourse allowed between the slaves of distant estates making acquaintanceship among them a rare exception. It was chiefly upon these distant estates that Chakra held communication with his confederates and clients.

It was now more than a year since he had made his pretended resurrection; and yet so cautiously had he crawled about, that only a few individuals were aware of the fact of his being still alive. Others *had seen his ghost!* Several negroes of Mount Welcome plantation would have sworn to having met the "duppy" of old Chakra, while travelling through the woods at night, and the sight had cured these witnesses of their propensity for midnight wandering.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BARGAIN OF OBEAH.

For a while after the departure of Cynthia, the temple of Obi remained untenanted, except by its dumb deities: its priest having gone to ferry his neophyte across the lagoon.

In a few minutes he returned alone—having left the mulatta to make her way up the cliff, and homeward to Mount Welcome, where she belonged.

It was evident that the visit of the mulatta had given him gratification. Even in the dim light of his lard lamp an expression of demoniac joy could be distinguished upon his ferocious visage, as he re-entered the hut.

"One dead!" cried he, in an exulting tone; "anodder upon 'im death-bed; and now de third, de las' an' wuss ob 'em all—ha! ha! ha! —he soon feel de vengeance ob Chakra, de myal-man!"

Thrice did the wild, maniac-like laugh peal from under the spreading limbs of the *ceiba*—reverberating with an unearthly echo against

the cliffs that hemmed in the Duppy's Hole. It startled the denizens of the dark lagoon; and, like echoes, came ringing up the ravine the scream of the crane, and the piercing cry of the wood-ibis.

These sounds had scarce died away, when one of a somewhat different intonation was heard from above. It resembled a shriek; or rather as if some one had whistled through his fingers. Whoever gave utterance to the sound was upon the top of the cliff—just over the hut.

Chakra was not startled. He knew it was a signal; and that it was given by the guest he was expecting.

"Da's de ole Jew!" muttered he, taking the rum-bottle, and concealing it under the bedstead. "You stay dar till I wants ye 'gain," added he, addressing himself in a confidential tone to this, the object of his greatest adoration. "Now for de nigga-dealer! I'se hab news fo' him 'll tickle 'im in de ribs like a ole guana lizzard. Not dat Chakra care fo' him. No—only, on dis voyage, boaf am sailin' in de same boat. Da he go 'gain!"

This last exclamation referred to a repetition of the signal heard further down: as if he

who was sounding it was advancing along the cliff, towards the gorge at the lower end.

A third call proceeded from that point, where the tree stairway scaled the precipice —indicating to Chakra that his visitor was there awaiting him.

Without further delay, the ferryman—grim as Charon himself—returned to his canoe; and once more paddled it across the lagoon.

While Chakra was thus occupied, a man could be seen descending the cliff, through the tangle of climbing plants, who, on the arrival of the canoe at the bottom, was standing, half concealed among the bushes, ready to step into it. The moon shone upon a blue body-coat, with bright buttons; upon a brown beaver hat and white skull-cap; upon tarnished top-boots, green goggles, and an enormous umbrella.

Chakra did not need to scan the sharp Israelitish features of the man to ascertain who he was.

Jacob Jessuron was there by appointment; and the myal-man knew both his presence and his purpose.

Not a word of recognition passed between the two, nor sign. Only a caution from Chakra

—as the Jew, swinging by a branch, let himself down into the canoe.

"'Tep in lightly, Massr Jake, an' doan' push da canoe down 'tream. 'T am jess' as much as I kin do to keep de ole craff out ob de eddy. Ef she get down da, den it 'ud be all up wifh boaf o' us."

"Blesh my soul! D' you shay so?" rejoined the Jew, glancing towards the gorge, and shivering as he listened to the hoarse groaning of the water among the grim rocks. "S'help me, I didn't know it was dangerous. Don't fear, Shakra! I shtep in ash light ash a feather."

So saying, the Jew dropped his umbrella into the bottom of the boat; and then let himself down upon the top of it, with as much gentleness as if he was descending upon a basket of eggs.

The ferryman, seeing his freight safely aboard, paddled back to the mooring-place; and, having secured his craft as before, conducted his visitor up the valley in the direction of the hut.

On entering the temple of Obi, Jessuron—unlike the devotee who had just left it—showed no signs either of surprise or fear at

its fantastic adornments. It was evident he had worshipped there before.

Nor did he evince a special veneration for the shrine; but, seating himself familiarly on the bamboo bedstead, uttered as he did so a sonorous "Ach!" which appeared as if intended to express satisfaction.

At the same time he drew from the ample pocket of his coat a shining object, which, when held before the lamp, appeared to be a bottle. The label seen upon its side, with the symbolical bunch of grapes, proved it to be a bottle of cognac.

The exclamation of the myal-man, which the sight of the label had instantaneously elicited, proved that on his side equal satisfaction existed at this mode of initiating an interview.

"Hash you a glass among your belongingsh?" inquired the Jew, looking around the hovel.

"No; dis yeer do?" asked his host, presenting a small calabash with a handle.

"Fush rate. Thish liquor drinksh goot out of anything. I had it from Capten Showler on hish lasht voyage. Jesh taste it, good Shakra, before we begins bishness."

A grunt from the negro announced his willing assent to the proposal.

"Whugh!" he ejaculated, after swallowing the allowance poured out for him into the calabash.

"Ach! goot it ish!" said his guest, on quaffing off a like quantity; and then the bottle and gourd being set on one side, the two queer characters entered into the field of free conversation.

In this the Jew took the initiative.

"I hash news for you," said he, "very shtrange news, if you hashn't already heard it, Shakra? Who dosh you think ish dead?"

"Ha!" exclaimed the myal-man, his eye suddenly lighting up with a gleam of ferocious joy; "he gone dead, am he?"

"Who? I hashent told you," rejoined the Jew, his features assuming an expression of mock surprise. "But true," he continued, after a pause; "true, you knew he wash sick —you knew Justish Bailey wash sick, an' *not likely to get over it.* Well—he hashent, poor man!—he's dead and in hish coffin by thish time: he breathed hish lasht yesterday."

A loud and highly-aspirated "Whugh!"

was the only answer made by the myal-man. The utterance was not meant to convey any melancholy impression. On the contrary, by its peculiar intonation, it indicated as much satisfaction as any amount of words could have expressed.

"It ish very shtrange," continued the penn-keeper, in the same tone of affected simplicity; "so short a time shince Mishter Ridgely died. Two of the three shustices that sat on your trial, goot Shakra. It looksh ash if Providensh had a hand in it—it dosh!"

"Or de Dibbil, mo' like, maybe?" rejoined Chakra, with a significant leer.

"Yesh—Gott or the Devil—one or t'other. Well, Shakra, you hash had your refenge, whichever hash helped you to it. Two of your enemies ish not likely to trouble you again; and ash for the third——"

"Nor he berry long, I'se speck'," interrupted the negro, with a significant grin.

"What you shay?" exclaimed the Jew, in an earnest under-tone. "Hash you heard anythings? Hash the wench been to see you?"

"All right 'bout her, Massr Jake."

"Goot—she *hash* been?"

"Jess leab dis place 'bout quar'r ob an hour 'go."

"And she saysh she will help you to set the obeah-shpell for him?"

"Hab no fear—she do all dat. Obi had spell oba her, dat make her do mose anythin' —ah! anythin' in de worl'—satin shoo. Obi all-powerful wi' dat gal."

"Yesh, yesh!" assented the Jew; "I knowsh all that. And if Obi wash to fail," added he, doubtingly, "you hash a drink, goot Shakra—I know you hash a drink, ash potent as Obi or any other of your gotsh."

A glance of mutual intelligence passed between the two.

"How long dosh it take your shpell to work?" inquired the penn-keeper, after an interval of silence, in which he seemed to be making some calculation.

"Dat," replied the negro, "dat depend altogedder on de saccomstance ob how long de spell am *wanted* to work. Ef 'im wanted, Chakra make 'im in tree day fotch de 'trongest indiwiddible cla out ó' 'im boots; or in tree hour he do same—but ob coorse dat ud be too soon fo' be safe. A spell of tree hours too

'trong. Dat not Obi work—'im look berry like pisen."

"Poison—yesh, yesh, it would."

"Tree day too short—tree week am de correct time. Den de spell work 'zackly like fever ob de typos. Nobody had s'picion 'bout 'um."

"Three weeks, you shay? And no symptoms to make schandal? You're shure that ish sufficient? Remember, Shakra; the Cushtos ish a strong man—strong ash a bull."

"No mar'r 'bout dat. Ef he 'trong as de bull, in dat period ob time he grow weak as de new-drop calf—I'se be boun' he 'taggering Bob long 'fore dat. You say de word, Massr Jake. Obi no like to nigga. Nigga only brack man: he no get pay fo' 'im work. Obi 'zemble buckra man. He no work 'less him pay."

"Yesh—yesh! dat ish only shust and fair. Obi should be paid; but shay, goot Shakra! how much ish his prishe for a shpell of thish kind?"

"Ef he hab no interest hisseff in de workin', ob de 'pell, he want a hunder poun'. When he hab interest, das diff'rent—den he take fifty."

"Fifty poundsh! That ish big monish, good Shakra! In thish case Obi hash an interest—more ash anybody elshe. He hash an enemy, and wants refenge. Ish that not true, goot Shakra!"

"Das da troof. Chakra no go fo' deny 'im. But das jess why Obi 'sent do dat leetle *chore* fo' fifty poun'. Obi enemy big buckra—'trong as you hab jess say—berry diff'cult fo' 'pell 'im. Any odder myal-man charge de full hunder poun'. Fack, no odder able do de job—no odder but ole Chakra hab dat power."

"Shay no more about the prishe. Fifty poundsh be it. Here'sh half down." The tempter tossed a purse containing coin into the outstretched palm of the obeah-man. "All I shtipulate for ish, that in three weeks you earn the other half; and then we shall both be shquare with the Cushtos Vochan—for I hash my refenge to shatisfy ash well as you, Shakra."

"Nuff sed, Massr Jake. 'Fore tree day de 'pell sha' be put on. You back come to de Duppy Hole tree night from dis, you hear how 'im work. Whugh!"

The gourd shell was again brought into requisition; and, after a parting "kiss" at

the cognac, the "heel-tap" of which remained in the hut, the precious pair emerged into the open air.

The priest of Obi having conducted his fellow-conspirator across the lagoon, returned to his temple, and set himself assiduously to finish what was left of the liquor.

"Whugh!" ejaculated he, in one of the pauses that occurred between two vigorous pulls at the bottle; "ole villum Jew wuss dan Chakra—wuss dan de Debbil hisseff! Doan' know why *he* want rebbenge. Das nuffin' to me. *I* want rebbenge, an', by de great Accompong! I'se a g'wine to hab it! Ef dis gal proob true, as de odders did—she *muss* proob true—in tree week de proud, fat buckra jussis dat condemn me to dat Jumbé Rock—'Cussos rodelorum,' as de call 'im—won't hab no more flesh on 'im bones dan de 'keleton he tink wa' myen. And den, when 'im die—ah! den, affer 'im die, de daughter ob dat Quasheba dat twenty year 'go 'corn de lub ob de Coromantee for dat ob de yellow Maroon—maybe her dauter, de Lilly Quasheba, sleep in de arms ob Chakra de myal-man! Whugh!"

As the minister of Obi gave utterance to this hypothetical threat, a lurid light glared up

in his sunken eyes, while his white, shark-like teeth were displayed in an exulting grin—hideous as if the Demon himself were smiling over some monstrous menace!

Both cognac and rum-bottle were repeatedly tasted, until the strong frame of the Coromantee gave way to the stronger spirit of the alcohol; and, muttering fearful threats in his gumbo jargon, he at length sank unconscious on the floor.

There, under the light of the lard lamp—now flickering feebly—he lay like some hideous satyr, whom Bacchus, by an angry blow, had felled prostrate to the earth!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MYSTERIOUS MOTIVE.

THE original motive of the myal-man, in conspiring the death of the Custos Vaughan, would have been strong enough to urge him on without this new instigation. As we have seen, it was one of deadly revenge—simple, and easily understood.

Not so easily understood was that which actuated the Jew. On the contrary, so secretly had he conceived his purposes, that no living man—not even Chakra himself—had been made privy to them. Up to this moment they may have appeared mysterious; and the time has arrived when it becomes necessary to reveal them. The explanation will show them to be only natural—only in keeping with the character of this crooked and cruel old man.

It is scarce necessary to say that Jacob Jessuron was no type of his race; nor, indeed, of any race. A German Jew by birth, it was not necessarily this that made him either

slave-dealer or slave-stealer. Christians have taken their full share in both branches of the nefarious trade; and equally with Jews and Mohammedans have they been guilty of its most hideous enormities. It was not, therefore, because Jacob Jessuron chanced to be a Jew that he was a trafficker in human flesh and blood—any more than that he was a villanous man; but because he was Jacob Jessuron—a representative of neither race nor nation, but simply a character *sui generis*.

Without dwelling upon his general demerits, let us return to the more particular theme of the motives which were instigating him to make a victim of his neighbour Vaughan—a death victim: for his conversation with Chakra showed that this was the very starting-point of his intentions.

In the first place, he was well acquainted with the domestic history of the planter—at least, with that portion of it that had transpired subsequent to the latter's coming into possession of Mount Welcome. He knew something of Mr. Vaughan previously—while the latter was manager of the Montagu Castle estate—but it was only after the Custos had become his nearer neighbour, by removal

to his present residence, that the Jew's knowledge of him and his private affairs had become intimate and accurate.

This knowledge he had obtained in various ways: partly by the opportunities of social intercourse, never very cordial; partly through business transactions; and, perhaps, more than all—at least, as regarded some of the more secret passages of Mr. Vaughan's history—from the myal-man, Chakra.

Notwithstanding his grotesque hideousness, the Coromantee was gifted with a rare though dangerous intelligence. He was *au fait* to everything that had occurred upon the plantation of Mount Welcome for a past period of nearly forty years. As already hinted, he knew too much; and it was this inconvenient omniscience that had caused him to be consigned to the Jumbé Rock.

For more than one purpose had the Jew made use of the myal-man; and if the latter was at present assisting him in his dark design, it was not the first by many, both deep and dark, in which Chakra had lent him a hand. Their secret partnership had been of long duration.

The Jew's knowledge of the affairs of Loftus

Vaughan extended to many facts unknown even to Chakra. One of these was, that his neighbour was blessed with an English brother, who had an only son.

An artist was the English brother, without fortune—almost without name. Many other circumstances relating to him had come to the knowledge of Jessuron; among the rest, that the proud Custos knew little about his poor English relatives, cared less, and scarcely kept up correspondence with them.

In what way could this knowledge interest Jacob Jessuron?—for it did.

Thus, then: it was known to him that Loftus Vaughan had never been married to the quadroon Quasheba. That circumstance, however, would have signified little, had Quasheba been a white woman, or even a "quinteroon"—in Jamaica termed a *mustee*, and by some fanciful plagiarists, of late, pedantically styled "octoroon"—a title which, it may here be stated, has no existence except in the romantic brains of these second-hand *littérateurs*.

We repeat it—had the slave Quasheba been either a white woman, or even a *mustee*, the fact of a marriage, or no marriage, would have

signified little—so far as regarded the succession of her offspring to the estates of the father. It is true that, if not married, the daughter would, by the laws of Jamaica—as by those of other lands—still have been *illegitimate;* but for all that, she could have inherited her father's property, *if left to her by will:* since in Jamaica no *entail* existed.

As things stood, however, the case was widely, and for the Lilly Quasheba—Kate Vaughan—dangerously different. Her mother was *only a quadroon;* and, married or unmarried, she, the daughter, could not inherit—*even by will*—beyond the paltry legacy of £2000 currency, or £1500 sterling!

Kate Vaughan was herself only a *mustee*—still wanting one step farther from slavery to bring her within the protecting pale of freedom and the enjoyment of its favours.

No will that Loftus Vaughan could decree, no testamentary disposition he might make, could render his daughter his devisee—his heiress.

He might will his property to anybody he pleased: so long as that anybody was a so-

called *white;* but, failing to make such testament, his estate of Mount Welcome, with all he possessed besides, must fall to the next of his own kin—in short, to his nephew Herbert.

Was there no remedy for this unspeakable dilemma? No means by which his own daughter might be saved from disinheritance?

There was. A special act might be obtained from the Assembly of the Island.

Loftus Vaughan knew the remedy, and fully intended to adopt it. Every day was he designing to set out for Spanish Town—the capital—to obtain the *special act;* and every day was the journey put off.

It was the execution of this design that the Jew Jessuron of all things dreaded most; and to prevent it was the object of his visit to the temple of Obi.

Why he dreaded it scarce needs explanation.

Should Loftus Vaughan fail in his intent, Herbert Vaughan would be the heir of Mount Welcome; and Herbert's heart was in the keeping of Judith Jessuron.

So fondly believed the Jewess; and, with

her assurance of the fact, so also the Jew.

The *love-spell* woven by Judith had been the first step towards securing the grand inheritance. The second was to be the *death-spell*, administered by Chakra and his acolyte.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEATH-SPELL.

On the night after that on which Chakra had given reception to Jessuron, and about the same hour, the Coromantee was at home in his hut, engaged in some operation of a nature apparently important: since it engrossed his whole attention.

A fire was burning in the middle of the floor, in a rude, extemporized furnace, constructed with four large stones, so placed as to inclose a small quadrangle.

The fuel with which this fire was fed, although giving out a great quantity of smoke, burnt also with a bright, clear flame. It was not wood, but consisted of a number of black agglutinated masses, bearing a resemblance to peat or coal.

A stranger to Jamaica might have been puzzled to make out what it was; though a denizen of the Island could have told at a glance, that the dark-coloured pieces piled upon

the fire were fragments detached from the nests of the Duck-ants; which, often as large as hogsheads, may be seen adhering to the trees of a tropical forest.

As the smoke emitted by this fuel is less painful to the eyes than that of a wood fire, and yet more efficacious in clearing out the mosquitoes—that plague of a southern clime—it may be supposed that the Coromantee had chosen it on that account. Whether or not, it served his purpose well.

A small iron pot, without crook or crane, rested upon the stones of the furnace; and the anxious glances with which the negro regarded its simmering contents—now stirring them a little, now lifting a portion in his wooden spoon, and carefully scrutinizing it under the light of the lamp—told that the concoction in which he was engaged was of a *chemical*, rather than *culinary* nature. As he bent over the fire—like a he-Hecate stirring her witches' cauldron—his earnest yet stealthy manner, combined with his cat-like movements and furtive glances, betrayed some devilish design.

This idea was strengthened on looking at the objects that lay near to his hand—some portions of which had been already consigned

to the pot. A cutacoo rested upon the floor, containing plants of several species; among which a botanist could have recognized the branched *calalue*, the dumb-cane, and various other herbs and roots of noxious fame. Conspicuous was the "Savannah flower," with its tortuous stem and golden corolla—a true dog-bane, and one of the most potent of vegetable poisons.

By its side could be seen its antidote—the curious nuts of the "nhandiroba": for the myal-man could *cure* as well as *kill*, whenever it became his interest to do so.

Drawing from such a larder, it was plain that he was not engaged in the preparation of his supper. Poisons, not provisions, were the ingredients of the pot.

The specific he was now concocting was from various sources, but chiefly from the sap of the Savannah flower. It was the *spell of Obeah!*

For whom was the Coromantee preparing this precious hell-broth?

His mutterings as he stooped over the pot revealed the name of his intended victim.

"You may be 'trong, Cussus Vaugh'n—dat I doan deny; but, by de power ob Obeah, you

soon shake in you shoes. Obeah! Ha! ha! ha! Dat do fo' de know-nuffin niggas. My Obeah am de Sabbana flower, de branch calalue, and the allimgator apple—dem's de 'pell mo' powerful dan Obi hisseff—dem's de stuff dat gib de shibberin' body and de staggerin' limbs to de enemies ob Chakra. Whugh!"

Once more dipping the spoon into the pot, and skimming up a portion of the boiling liquid, he bent forward to examine it.

"'T am done!" he exclaimed. "Jess de right colour—jess de right tickness. Now fo' bottle de'licka!"

Saying this, he lifted the pot from the fire; and, after first pouring the "liquor" into a calabash, and leaving it for some moments to cool, he transferred it to the rum-bottle—long since emptied of its original contents.

Having carefully pressed in the cork, he set the bottle to one side—not in concealment, but as if intended for use at no very distant time.

Then, having gathered up his scattered pharmacopœia, and deposited the whole collection in the cutacoo, he stepped into the door-

way of the hut, and, with a hand on each post, stood in an attitude to listen.

It was evident he expected some visitor; and who it was to be was revealed by the muttered soliloquy in which he continued to indulge. The slave Cynthia was to give him another *séance*.

"Time dat yella wench wa' come. Muss be nigh twelve ob de night. Maybe she hab call, an' a no hear her, fo' de noise ob dat catrack? A bess go down b'low. Like nuf a fine her da'!"

As he was stepping across the threshold to put this design into execution, a cry, uttered in the shrill treble of a woman's voice—and just audible through the soughing sound of the cataract—came from the cliff above.

"Da's de wench!" muttered the myal-man, as he heard it. "A make sartin shoo she'd come. Lub lead woman troo fire an' water—lead um to de Debbil. Seed de time dat ar' yella' gal temp' dis chile. No care now. But one Chakra ebber care 'brace in dese arms. Her he clasp only once, he content—he willen' den fo' die. Augh!"

As the Coromantee uttered the impassioned

ejaculation, he strode outward from the door, and walked with nervous and hurried step—like one urged on by the prospect of soon achieving some horrible but heartfelt purpose he had been long contemplating from a distance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE INVOCATION OF ACCOMPONG.

THE canoe soon made its trip, and returned with Cynthia seated in the stern. As upon the occasion of her former visit, she carried a basket upon her arm filled with comestibles, and not forgetting the precious bottle of rum.

As before, she followed the myal-man to his hut—this time entering with more confidence, and seating herself unbidden upon the side of the bamboo bedstead.

Still, she was not without some feeling of fear; as testified by a slight trembling that might be observed when her eyes rested upon the freshly-filled bottle, that stood in a conspicuous place. The look which she turned upon it told that she possessed some previous information as to the nature of its contents—or perhaps she had only a suspicion.

"Da's de bottle fo' you," said the myal-man, noticing her glance, "and dis hya," continued he, drawing the other out of Cynthia's basket, "dis hya am de one fo' ——

He was about to add "me," but before he could pass the word out of his mouth, he had got the neck of the rum-bottle into it; and the "gluck-gluck" of the descending fluid was substituted for the personal pronoun.

The usual "Whugh!" wound up the operation, clearing the Coromantee's throat; and then, by a gesture, he gave Cynthia to understand that he was ready to proceed with the more serious business of the interview.

"Dat bottle," said he, pointing to the one that contained his decoction, "am de obeah-'pell. 'Ill make Cubina lub you while dar's a tuff ob wool on de top o' 'im head. Dat long 'nuf, I reck'n; fo' when 'im go bald, you no care fo' 'im lub."

"Is that the love-spell you spoke of?" inquired the mulatta, with an ambiguous expression of countenance, in which hope appeared struggling with doubt.

"De lub-spell? No—not 'zackly dat. De lub-spell am different. *It* am ob de nature ob an ointment. Hya! I'se got 'im in dis coco-shell."

As Chakra said this he raised his hand, and drew out from a cranny in the thatch about three-quarters of the shell of a cocoa-nut;

inside which, instead of its white coagulum, appeared a carrot-coloured paste, resembling the pulp of the *sapotamammee*—for this, in reality, it was.

"Da's de lub mixture!" continued the obeah-man, in a triumphant tone; "da's for Cubina!"

"Ah! Cubina is to take that?"

"Shoo he am. He mus' take 'im. A gib it him, and den he go mad fo' you. You he lub, an' he lub you, like two turtle dove in de 'pring time. Whugh!"

"Good Chakra—you are sure it will do Cubina no harm?"

The query proved that the jealousy of the mulatta had not yet reached the point of revenge.

"No," responded the negro; "do 'im good—do 'im good, an' nuffin else. Now, Cynthy, gal," continued he, turning his eyes upon the bottle; "das for de ole Cussus ob Moun' Welc'm—take um—put 'im in you basket."

The woman obeyed, though her fingers trembled as she touched the bottle that contained the mysterious medicine.

"And what am I to do with it, Chakra?" she asked, irresolutely.

"Wha you do? I tole you arready wha you do. You gib to massr—you enemy and myen."

"But what is it?"

"Why you ask daat? I tole you it am de obeah-'pell."

"Oh, Chakra! is it poison?"

"No, you fool—ef 'twa pizen, den it kill de buckra right off. It no kill 'im. It only make um sick, an' den, preehap, it make 'im die long time atterward. Daz no pizen! You 'fuse gib 'im?"

The woman appeared to hesitate, as if some sparks of a better nature were rising within her soul. If there were such sparks, only for a short while were they allowed to shine.

"You 'fuse gib 'im?" repeated the tempter, hastening to extinguish them. "If you 'fuse, I no put de lub-spell on Cubina. Mor'n dat —I set de obeah fo' you—you youseff!"

"Oh, no—no, Chakra!" cried she, cowering before the Coromantee; "I not refuse—I give it—anything you command me."

"Dere, now—das sensible ob you, Cynthy. Now I gib you de instrukshin how fo' 'minister de 'pell. Lissen, an' 'member ebbery ting I go 'peak you."

As the hideous sorcerer said this, he sat down in front of his neophyte—fixing his eyes upon hers, as if the better to impress his words upon her memory.

"Fuss an' formoss, den, de grand buckra ob Moun' Welcome, ebbery night 'fore he go bed, hab glass ob rum punch. I know he used hab —he so 'till, eh?"

"Yes—he does," mechanically answered the mulatta.

"Berry likely—dat ere am one ob de habits neider buckra nor brack man am like break off. Ebbery night, shoo?"

"Yes—every night—one glass—sometimes two."

"Gorry! ef twa me, me hab two—not sometime, but alway—'cept when a make um tree, ha! ha! Berry well, das all right; and now, gal, who mix de punch fo' 'im? You use do dat youseff, Cynthy!"

"It is still my business. I make it for him every night."

"Good—das jess de ting. Whugh! now we know how set de 'pell ob de obeah. You see dis hya? It am de claw of de mountain crab. You see de 'cratch—dar—inside ob de machine? Well—up to dat mark it holds jess

de 'zack quantum. Ebbery night you make de punch, you fill up dar out ob dis bottle. You pour in de glass—fuss de sugar an' lemon —den de water—den de rum, which am 'tronger dan de water; an' affer dat de 'pell out of dis bottle, which am de 'trongest ob dem all. You 'member all a hab tell you?"

"I shall remember it," rejoined the woman, with a firmness of voice, partly assumed—for she dreaded to show any sign of irresolution.

"Ef you no do, den de spell turn roun' an' he work 'gin youseff. When de Obi once 'gins he no 'top till he hab 'im victim. Now a go fo 'voke de god Accompong. He come whenebba Chakra call. He make 'im 'pearance in de foam ob de catrack out yonner. Affer dat no mortal him lay not till one be promise fo' de sacrafize. You 'tay in hya—De god muss not see *no woman*—you lissen—you hear um voice."

Rising with a mysterious air, and taking down from its peg an old palm-leaf wallet, that appeared to contain some heavy article, the myal-man stepped out of the hut, closing the door behind him, lest—as he informed the

mulatta, in *sotto voce*—the god might set his eyes on her, and get into a rage.

Cynthia seemed to consider the precaution scarce sufficient; for the moment the door was closed, in order to make herself still more secure against being seen, she glided up to the light and extinguished it. Then, groping her way back to the bedstead, she staggered down upon it, and sate shivering with apprehension.

As the myal-man had enjoined upon her, she listened; and, as he had promised her, she heard—if not the voice of Accompong—sounds that were worthy of having proceed from the throat of that Ethiopian divinity.

At first a voice reached her which she knew to be human: since it was the voice of Chakra himself. It was uttered, nevertheless, in strange and unnatural tones, that at each moment kept changing. Now it came ringing through the interstices of the bamboos, in a kind of long-drawn solo, as if the myal-man was initiating his ceremonies with the verse of a psalm. Then the chaunt became quicker, by a sort of *crescendo* movement, and the song appeared transformed to a *recitative*. Next

were heard sounds of a very different intonation, resembling the shrill, harsh call of a cow-horn or conch-shell, and gradually dying off into a prolonged bass, like the groaning of a cracked trombone.

After this had continued for some moments, there ensued a dialogue—in which the listener could recognize only one of the voices as that of Chakra.

Whose could be the other? It could only be that of Accompong. The god was upon the ground!

Cynthia trembled as she thought how very near he was. How lucky she had blown out the light! With the lamp still burning, she must have been seen: for both Chakra and the deity were just outside the door, and so near that she could not only hear their voices with distinctness, but the very words that were spoken.

Some of these were in an unknown tongue, and she could not understand them. Others were in English, or rather its synonym in the form of a negro *patois*. These last she comprehended; and their signification was not of a character to tranquillize her thoughts, but the contrary.

Chakra, chantant:—

"Open de bottle—draw de cork,
De 'pell he work—de 'pell he work;
De buckra man muss die!"

"*Muss die!*" repeated Accompong, in a voice that sounded as if from the interior of an empty hogshead.

"De yella gal she gib 'im drink;
It make 'im sick—it make 'im sr'ink,
It send 'im to 'im grave!"

"*Him grave!*" came the response of Accompong.

"An' if de yella gal refuse,
She 'tep into de buckra's shoes,
An' fill de buckra's tomb."

"*Buckra's tomb!*" echoed the African god, in a sonorous and emphatic voice, that told there was no alternative to the fate thus hypothetically proclaimed.

There was a short interval of silence, and then the shrill, conch-like sound was again heard—as before, followed by the long-drawn bass.

This was the exorcism of the god—as the same sounds, previously heard, had been his invocation.

It was also the *finale* of the ceremony:

since the moment after Chakra pushed open the door, and stood in the entrance of the hut.

"Cynthy, gal," said he, with a look of mysterious gravity, "why you blow out de light? But no matter for light. It's all oba. Did you hear the god 'peak?"

"I did," murmured the mulatta, still trembling at what she had heard.

"You hear wha him say?"

"Yes—yes."

"Den he 'peak de troof. Nuffin mor'n dat. You take heed—I 'vise you, as you friend. You go troo wif de 'pell now 'im 'gun, else you life not worth so much trash ob de sugacane. A say no more. Ebbery night, in um fuss glass, de full ob de crabclaw, up to de mark. Now, gal, come 'lon'."

The last command was the more readily obeyed since Cynthia was but too glad to get away from a place whose terrors had so severely tested her courage.

Taking up the basket—in which the bottle containing the dangerous decoction had been already placed—she glided out of the hut, and once more followed the Coromantee to his canoe.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MIDNIGHT WANDERERS.

ONCE more under the *ceiba*, that gigantic trysting tree, stood the Maroon and his mistress. Not, as before, in the bright noonday sun, but near the mid-hour of the night. The Foolah had dared the dangers of the forest to meet her beloved Cubina.

And there were dangers in that forest, more to be dreaded than fierce beasts or ravenous reptiles—more to be dreaded than the tusks of the wild boar, or the teeth of the scaly alligator. There were monsters in human form far more fearful to be encountered; and at that moment not very distant from the spot where the lovers had made their rendezvous.

Love recks little of dangers. Cubina knew of none; and, in Yola's belief, there was no danger while Cubina was near.

The moon was in high heaven, full, calm, and clear. Her beams filled the glade with a

silvery effulgence. It was a moonlight that almost rivalled the brightness of day. The flowers over the earth, and the blossoms upon the trees, appeared full blown: as if they had opened their petals to drink in the delightful dew. Borne upon the soft, silent breeze, the nocturnal sounds of the forest fell with a tremulous cadence upon the ear; while the nightingale of the West, as if proud of the superiority of her counterfeit notes, in turns imitated them all.

The lovers stood in shadow—but it was the shadow of the *ceiba*. There was none in their hearts; and had the moonlight at that moment fallen upon their faces, no trace of a cloud could have been detected there.

It was a happy meeting—one of the happiest they had yet enjoyed. Each had brought good news to the other. Cubina, that the brother of his beloved was still safe under his protection — safe and well; Yola, that her young mistress had promised to bestow upon her her freedom.

Within the few days since they had last met, many things had transpired to interest both. Each had a tale to tell.

Yola related how the story of her brother's

misfortunes, though strictly kept from the servants at Mount Welcome, had been told to her mistress; how Miss Vaughan, on hearing it, had requested her father to grant her (Yola's) manumission; and how the Custos had consented to the request. Conditionally, however. Her "free papers" were to be dated from a certain day—that on which Kate Vaughan was to become a bride, but that day was supposed not to be far distant.

It was joyous news for the Maroon. He might keep his hundred pounds for the plenishing of his mountain home!

This piece of intelligence might have taken Cubina more by surprise, but for the understanding that now existed between him and the Custos—whom he had of late frequently visited. Certain conditions had become established between the magistrate and the Maroon, which rendered the latter less apprehensive about the future. Mr. Vaughan had made some promises to himself in regard to the manumission of Yola. It is true, these had also been *conditional;* and their performance was to depend, to a great degree, on the success of the prosecution to be instituted against the Jew. But, with the Custos him-

self as a prosecutor, Cubina felt sanguine that the conditions would be accomplished.

These were circumstances to be kept secret. Even to his sweetheart the lover was not permitted to impart the knowledge of this affair. Only did he make known to her that steps were being taken to cause the restitution of her brother's property; but how, where, and when, could not be divulged until that day when war should be openly declared against the enemy. So had the Custos commanded.

Cubina, nevertheless, could not help being gratified by the intelligence which Yola had conveyed to him. The promise of Miss Vaughan had but one condition—her bridal day; and that was definite and certain.

"Ah!" said Cubina, turning with a proud look towards his sweetheart, "it will be a happy day for all. No, not for all," added he, his face suddenly assuming an expression of sadness; "not for all. There is one, I fear, to whom that day will not bring happiness!"

"I know one, too, Cubina," rejoined the girl, her countenance appearing to reflect the expression that had come over his.

"Oh, you know it, too? Miss Vaughan

has told you then, I suppose? I hope she does not boast of it?"

"What she boast of, Cubina?"

"Why, of breaking his heart, as you would do mine, if you were to marry somebody else. Poor young fellow! *Crambo!* If I'm not mistaken, it will be a sad day for him!"

The girl looked up, in puzzled surprise.

"Sad day for him! No, Cubina; he very happy. For her—poor missa—that day be sad."

"*Vayate!* What do you mean, Yola?"

"No more dan I say, Cubina. Missa Kate be very unhappy that day she marry Mr. Mongew—she very so now."

"What!" exclaimed Cubina, suddenly placing himself in an attitude of unusual attention; "do I understand you to say that Miss Vaughan don't wish to marry this Mr. Smythje?"

"She no love him, Cubina. Why she wish marry him, then?"

"Ha!" significantly ejaculated the Maroon, while an expression of joy came over his countenance; "what makes you think she don't love him? Have you a reason, Yola?"

"Missa me say so. She me tell everything, Cubina."

"You are sure she has said that she don't love him?"

"She laugh at him—she no care for him. Girl no love one she laugh at—never."

"*Vaya!* I hope you will never laugh at me, then! But say, dearest; do you know why she is going to marry Mr. Smythje?"

"Massa her make marry. He Mr. Mongew very, very rich—he great planter. That why she him go to marry."

"Ho!—ho!" thoughtfully ejaculated the captain of Maroons. "I suspected there was some compulsion," continued he, not speaking to his companion, but muttering the words to himself.

"Can you tell me, Yola," he asked, turning again to his sweetheart; "do you know *why* your mistress does not like this grand gentleman? Has she told you any reason?"

"Very good reason, Cubina. She another love; that why she Mongew not like."

"Ah! she's in love with somebody else! Have you heard who it is, Yola?"

"Oh, yes; you know him youself. He Missa Kate's cousin; she *him* love."

"Her cousin, Herbert Vaughan?"

"Yes, he name Herber'; he come once—never more come. No matter, she love him first time—she him love ever more! Same I you, Cubina; I you love first time, all the same for ever."

"You are sure of all this?" inquired Cubina, in his anxiety to know more, resisting the temptation to reciprocate the endearing speech; "you are sure Miss Vaughan loves her cousin Herbert?"

"Sure, Cubina; missa say so many, many time. She have very much grief for him. She hear he marry one fine, bad lady. You know old Jew Jess'ron—his daughter he go marry."

"I have heard so," rejoined Cubina, evidently keeping back from his sweetheart a more definite knowledge of the subject which he himself possessed; "I have heard so. After all," he continued, speaking reflectingly, "it might not happen—neither of these marriages. There's a proverb, Yola, I've heard among the white folks—'*Many a slip between the cup and the lip.*' I hope it won't be true of you and me; but it might come to pass between young Master Vaughan and

Miss Jessuron. Who knows? I know something. *Por Dios!* you've given me good news, I think, for somebody. But tell me, Yola; have you heard them say *when* your mistress and this great gentleman are to be married?"

"Massa he say soon. He tell Missa Kate he go great journey. When he come back they get marry; he Missa Kate say so yesterday."

"The Custos going a journey? Have you heard where?"

"Spanish Town, missa me tell—a great big city far away."

"I wonder what that can be for," said Cubina to himself, in a conjectural way. "Well, Yola," he added, after a pause, and speaking more earnestly, "listen to me. As soon as Mr. Vaughan has set out on this journey, you come to me. Perhaps I may have a message for your mistress. Have you heard when he intends to take the road?"

"He go morrow morning."

"Ha! so soon! Well, so much the better for us, and maybe for somebody else. You must meet me here to-morrow night. Tell your mistress it concerns herself. No, don't

tell her," he added, correcting himself, "she will let you come without that excuse; besides, it might be that——never mind! Come, anyhow. I shall be waiting for you at this same hour."

Yola gave her willing promise to keep an appointment so accordant to her inclinations.

For some time longer the lovers conversed, imparting to each other the ordinary news of life—the details of common things—to be at length succeeded by words only of love, of far, far deeper interest.

Cubina swore eternal truth—by the trees around—by the sky above—by the bright moon, and the blue heavens.

He had done the same a score of times; and as often had he been believed. But lovers never tire of such vows—neither of hearing nor repeating them.

The African maiden answered with promises of faithfulness, alike free, alike fervent. She no longer sighed for her far Gambian home—no more mourned the fate that had torn her from a court to consign her to slavery. The dark hours of her life seemed to have ended; and her future, as her present, was full of hope and bliss!

For more than an hour did the enamoured pair indulge in this sweet converse. They were about to close it with a parting kiss.

The Maroon stood with his strong arms tenderly entwined around the waist of his mistress, who willingly yielded to the embrace. Her slender form, under the shadow of the *ceiba*, looked like the statue of some Egyptian maiden in bronze antique.

The adieu had been spoken more than once; but still the lovers lingered, as if loth to give the parting kiss. There had been more than one, but not that which was to end the interview.

Ere their lips had met to achieve it, the design was interrupted. Voices fell upon their ears, and two forms emerging into the moonlight at the lower end of the glade, rapidly advanced in the direction of the *ceiba*.

As if by a common instinct, Cubina and his mistress stepped silently and simultaneously back, retiring together between the buttresses of the tree. There it was dark enough for concealment. Only an eye bent on purposed scrutiny could have detected their presence.

The forms drew near. They were those of a man and a woman. The moonlight shining

full upon them, rendered them easy of recognition; but their voices had already declared their identity. Both the intruders were known to both the lovers. They were the Jew Jessuron and the slave Cynthia.

"*Crambo!*" muttered the Maroon, as he saw who they were. "What on earth can *they* be doing together, at this time of the night, and here—so far away from any house? *Maldito!* some wicked business, I warrant."

By this time the brace of midnight strollers had got opposite to the tree, and the Jew was delivering himself of a speech, which was plainly heard by those who stood concealed in its shadow.

"Now, Cynthy—goot wench!—you hashn't said yet why he hash sent for me! Do you know what it ish for?"

"I don't, Mass Jess'ron, unless it be——"

"Unlesh what, wench?"

"Somethin' 'bout the news I took him afore I come to you, when I went with his basket of provisions——"

"Ah-ha! you took him some newsh—what newsh, girl?"

"Only that Massr Vagh'n am a-goin' away in the mornin'."

"Blesh my soul!" exclaimed the Jew, suddenly stopping in his tracks, and turning towards the mulatta with a look of troubled surprise. "Blesh my soul! You don't shay that, dosh you?"

"Dey say so at the Buff, Massr Jess'ron. Besides, I know m'self he's a-goin'. I help pack up him shirts in de trabbelin valise. He's a-goin' a hossaback."

"But where, wench? where?" gasped the Jew, in hurried and anxious speech.

"Dey say to 'Panish Town—odder side ob de Island."

"Spanish Town! ach!" cried the penn-keeper, in a tone betokening that the words had conveyed some very unwelcome intelligence. "Spanish Town! S'help me, it ish! I knew it! I knew it! ach!"

And, as he repeated the aspirated ejaculation, he struck his umbrella fiercely into the ground—as if to render more emphatic the chagrin that had been communicated by the answer.

Only for a few seconds did he make pause upon the spot.

"Come on!" cried he to his companion, hurriedly moving off from the tree; "come

on, wench! If that'sh the case, ash you shay, there'sh no time to be losht—not a minute, s'help me!"

And with this elegant reflection, he ended the brief dialogue, and strode swiftly and silently onward across the glade—the woman following close upon his heels.

"*Demonios!*" muttered the Maroon, as they went off. "That John Crow and his pretty partner are on some ugly errand, I fear! It appears to be the Custos they're conspiring against. *Cramba!* I wonder what they are after with him! What can the old Jew have to do with his going to Spanish Town? I must follow them, and see if I can discover. There appears to be some scheme brewing, that bodes no good to Mr. Vaughan. Where can they be gadding to at this time of night? *From* the Jew's penn, instead of *towards* it!"

These interrogative reflections the Maroon made to himself. Then, turning once more to his sweetheart, with a gesture that declared his intention to be gone, he said:—

"We must part, Yola, and this instant, love: else I may lose their trail. Adieu! adieu!"

And, with a quick kiss and equally hurried embrace, the lovers separated—Yola returning to Mount Welcome, by a path well known to her; while the Maroon glided off on the track taken by the penn-keeper and his female companion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRACKING THE STROLLERS.

THE Maroon was but a few moments in recovering the "spoor" of the two nocturnal strollers.

At the point where they had gone out of the glade, there was a path that led up the hills in the direction of the Jumbé Rock. It was a mere cattle track—used only very occasionally by bipeds. Being the only path that went that way, and judging, moreover, that neither the Jew nor his follower would be likely to traverse the thicket at random, Cubina concluded that they had gone by this path.

Throwing himself upon it, and advancing with a quick but silent step, he soon recovered sight of them.

The shade of the gigantic trees—it was a primeval forest through which they were passing—was favourable to his design; and without much risk of being seen, he was able to keep them in view, and almost within earshot.

At that moment, the mind of the Jew was too pre-occupied to be suspicious; and the mulatta was not likely to trouble her thoughts about whether they were followed or not. Had she known, however—had she even suspected—that her steps were dogged, and by Cubina, the Maroon, it would, no doubt, have sharpened her senses.

"They appear to be making for the Jumbé Rock?" mentally soliloquized Cubina, as they commenced ascending the slope of the mountain. "*Crambo!* That is odd enough! What do they intend to do there at this hour of the night—or at any hour, I might say? And who's the *he* that's been sending for Jessuron? She took *him* a provision basket! By that, it ought to be some runaway. But what has the old Jew to do with a runaway? To get out of his bed at this time of the night, and tramp it three miles through the woods! For that matter, they say he don't sleep much anyhow; and, like the owl, night's his favourite time, I suppose. Something's being cooked for the Custos: for that girl's a very devil! Not that I should care about *him*, or what happened to him, at any other time. He's not much; and is only helping me in that

matter because he hates the other. No matter for him; but from what Yola's told me, I'd go to the world's end for his daughter. Ha! I may do her a service yet. *Valga me Dios!* what's up now? They've stopped!"

The Jew and his companion, about a hundred yards ahead, had suddenly come to a stand. They appeared to be scrutinizing the path.

Cubina, crouching in the shadow of the bushes, stopped likewise; and waited for the others to advance.

They did so after a short interval—hastening on as before; but in a slightly divergent direction.

"Ho, ho!" muttered the Maroon; "not for the Jumbé Rock, but the Duppy's Hole! I remember now. The path forks up yonder. They've taken that which goes to the Hole. Well! it don't help me to comprehend their purpose a bit clearer. *Carrai!* that Duppy's Hole! Didn't some of my fellows tell me they've heard strange noises there lately? Quaco is ready to swear he saw the ghost of the old myal-man, Chakra, standing upon the edge of the cliff! They're going there, as sure as my name's Cubina!"

And with this conjectural reflection the Maroon forsook the shadow under which he had been sheltering, and flitted forward along the path.

Another five hundred yards further on, his conjecture was confirmed. The parties dogged by him had reached the edge of the precipice that frowned down upon the Duppy's Hole, and there halted.

Cubina also made stop—as before concealing himself within the black shadow of the bushes.

He had scarcely crouched down, when his ears were saluted by a shrill whistle—not made by the lips, but proceeding from some instrument, as a reed or a common dog-call. It was plainly a signal, sounded either by Cynthia or the Jew, Cubina could not tell which.

Only once was it given. And there was no answer—for that similar sound, that came like an echo from the far forest, was a counterfeit. It was the mimic-note of the mock-bird.

Cubina, skilled in these voices of the night, knew this, and paid no heed to the distant sound. His whole attention was absorbed in

watching the movements of the two individuals still standing upon the edge of the cliff. The white sky was beyond them, against which he could see their dark *silhouettes* outlined with perfect distinctness.

After about a minute's time, he saw them once more in motion; and then both appeared to vanish from his view—not wasting into the air, but sinking into the ground, as if a trap-door had admitted them to the interior of the earth.

He saw this without much surprise. He knew they must have gone down the precipice, but how they had performed this feat was something that did surprise him a little.

It was but a short spell of astonishment. In a score of seconds he stood upon the edge of the precipice, at the spot where they had disappeared.

He looked down. He could trace, though dimly, a means of descent among the wattle of boughs and corrugated creepers that clasped the *façade* of the cliff. Even under the fantastic gleam of the moon, he could see that human hands had helped the construction of this natural ladder.

He stayed not to scrutinize it. An object

of greater interest challenged his glance. On the disc of the lagoon—in the moonlight, a sheet of silver, like a mirror in its frame of dark mahogany—moved a thing of sharp, elliptical shape—a canoe.

Midships of the craft, a form was crouching. Was it human or demon?

The aspect was demon—the shape scarce human. Long, ape-like arms; a hunched back; teeth gleaming in the moonlight like the incisors of a shark; features everything but human to one who had not seen them before!

Cubina had seen them before. To him, though not familiar, they were known. If not the ghost of Chakra, he saw Chakra himself!

CHAPTER XXX.

CYNTHIA IN THE WAY.

THE heart of the young Maroon, though by nature bold and brave, was for a moment impressed with fear. He had known the myal-man of Mount Welcome — never very intimately—but enough to identify his person. Indeed, once seen, Chakra was a man to be remembered.

Cubina had, like every one else for miles around, heard of the trial of the Coromantee conjuror, and his condemnation to exposure on the Jumbé Rock. The peculiar mode of his execution—the cruel sentence—the celebrity of the scene where the criminal had been compelled to pass the last miserable hours of his existence—all combined to render his death even more notorious than his life; and few there were in the western end of the Island who had not heard of the myal-man of Mount Welcome, and the singular mode of atonement

that justice had demanded him to make for his crimes.

In common with others, Cubina believed him dead. No wonder, then, that the heart of the Maroon should for a moment misgive him on seeing Chakra seated in a canoe, and paddling himself across the calm surface of the lagoon!

Under any circumstances, the sight of the Coromantee was not calculated to beget confidence in the beholder; but his unexpected appearance just then produced within the mind of the Maroon a feeling somewhat stronger than astonishment, and for some seconds he stood upon the cliff overcome by a feeling of awe.

Very soon, however, he remembered the statement which his lieutenant had made, and which Quaco had put in the form of an asseveration.

Quaco, like most of his colour, a firm believer in "Duppy" and "Jumbé," had believed it to be Chakra's ghost he had seen; and under the terror with which the sight had inspired him, instead of making an attempt to pursue the apparition, and prove whether it was flesh and blood, or only "empty air," he

had used his utmost speed to get away from the spot, leaving the myal-man's ghost full master of the ground.

Cubina, less given to superstitious inclinings, only for a moment permitted himself to be mystified with the idea of a "Duppy." Quaco's experience, along with the presence of the penn-keeper and his companion—there evidently for a purpose—guided him to the conclusion that what he saw in the canoe was no spiritual Chakra, but Chakra in the flesh.

How the Coromantee came to be still living and moving, the Maroon could not so easily comprehend; but Cubina possessed acute reasoning powers, and the presence of the Jew, evidently *en rapport* with the restored conjuror, went far towards explaining the mystery of the latter's resurrection.

Satisfied that he saw Chakra himself, the Maroon placed himself in a position to watch the movements both of the men in the canoe, and those who had summoned him across the lagoon.

In another moment the canoe was lost sight of. It had passed under the bushes at the bottom of the cliff, where it was not visible from above.

Voices now ascended, which could be heard, but not distinctly.

Cubina could distinguish three voices taking part in the conversation—Chakra's, the Jew's, and, at longer intervals, the shrill treble of the slave Cynthia.

He bent his ear, and listened with keen attention—in hopes of hearing what they said. He could only catch an occasional word. The roar of the cascade rising along with the voices hindered him from hearing them distinctly; and, notwithstanding his earnest desire to do so, he was unable to make out the matter of the conversation.

Only for a short while was he kept waiting. The *trialogue* came to a close, followed by a brief interval of silence—at the end of which the canoe once more made its appearance upon the open water of the lagoon.

Two persons only were in it, Chakra and the Jew. Cynthia had stayed by the bottom of the cliff.

Cubina made this observation with some chagrin. It was a circumstance that promised to frustrate the design he had suddenly conceived: of following the myal-man to his lair.

This he desired to do, in order to make himself acquainted with the hiding-place of the remarkable runaway.

That it was down in the Duppy's Hole there could be no doubt; and therefore the Maroon might at any time find him there.

This reflection would have contented him; but, on seeing the Jew ferried across the lagoon, he conjectured that he and Chakra were bent upon the completion of some horrid plot, which, by following, he, Cubina, might overhear, and, perhaps, be enabled to counteract.

The Maroon was aware of the difficulty of descending into the Duppy's Hole. He knew there was but one way—by the bushes that clustered along the face of the cliff at his feet. Once, while on the chase, he and his followers, aided by a rope-ladder, had gone down; and, in search of game, had explored the wooded covert beyond. At that time, however, Chakra had not been *executed;* and the hunter had found no trace of human presence in the solitary place.

He knew that he could follow the canoe by swimming; as in this way he had crossed before, but now that Cynthia barred the way,

it would be impossible for him to reach the water unobserved.

To follow the conspirators further was out of the question. His chance was cut off by the interposition of the mulatta. He could only remain on the cliff and await their return.

He was reflecting upon what course to pursue, when a rustling sound reached him from below. It was made by some one moving among the bushes that grew against the face of the precipice.

He caught one of the branches; and, supporting himself by it, craned his neck over the cliff. His eye fell upon the brilliant chequer of a *bandanna*, visible among the leaves. It was the toque upon the head of Cynthia. It was in motion; and he could see that she was ascending by the tree stairway he had already observed.

Without staying to witness the ascent, he turned back into the underwood by the side of the path; and, crouching down, he waited to see what the woman intended doing. Perhaps her part in the performance had been played out—at least, for that night—and she was on her way homeward?

That was what Cubina conjectured, as well as just what he would have wished.

His conjecture proved correct. The mulatta, on mounting to the crest of the cliff, stopped only for a moment, to adjust upon her arm a basket she had brought up—from the half-open lid of which protruded the neck of a bottle. Then, casting her eyes forward, she struck off into the shadowy forest path, and was soon out of sight.

The moment after she had passed him, the Maroon glided silently forward to the edge of the cliff, and commenced descending the stair. Such feat was nothing to him; and in a few seconds he had reached the edge of the lagoon.

Here he paused—to make sure that the canoe had arrived at its destination, and that its late occupants had disembarked from it.

After a moment spent in this *reconnoissance* —looking sharply, and listening with all his ears—he became satisfied that the coast was clear; and, letting himself stealthily into the water, he swam for the opposite shore of the lagoon.

Upon only about two-thirds of the surface of the lagoon did the moonlight fall—the cliff

casting its shadow upon the other third. Keeping within the boundaries of this shadow, and swimming as silently as a fish, Cubina succeeded in reaching the opposite shore, without perceiving any sign that he had been observed.

Under the heavy timber, with which the upper half of the ravine was covered, the darkness was as deep as if not a ray of moonlight came down from the sky. Only on the stream itself, and here and there through a break in the umbrageous forest, could the moonbeams reach the surface of the earth. Elsewhere, from cliff to cliff, the obscurity was complete.

Cubina conjectured, and correctly, that there was a path leading from the anchorage of the canoe; and to find this was his first purpose.

Keeping around the edge of the lagoon, he soon came upon the craft—empty, and anchored under a tree.

The moonlight, entering here from the open water, showed him the *embouchure* of the path, where it entered the underwood; and, without losing a moment's time, he commenced moving along it.

Silently as a cat he stole onward, at intervals pausing to listen; but he could only hear the hissing sound of the upper cascade—to which he was now making approach.

There was a space in front of the waterfall, where the trees stood thinly, and this opening was soon reached.

On arriving at its edge the Maroon again stopped to reconnoitre.

Scarcely a second of time did he need to pause. Light flashed in his eyes through the interstices of what appeared to be a sort of grating. It was the bamboo door of the obeah hut. Voices, too, reverberated through the bars.

Within were the men upon whom it was his purpose to play eavesdropper.

In another instant Cubina was cowering under the cotton-tree, close up to the door-post.

CHAPTER XXXI.

STRANGE DISCLOSURES.

THE two plotters were palavering loud enough. In that place there was no need—at least, so thought they—for restrained speech; and the listener could have heard every word, but for the hoarse hissing of the cataract. This, at times, hindered him from distinguishing what was said; and only in detached portions could he pick up the thread of the discourse. Enough, however, heard he to cause him astonishment—the greatest of all, that in the Island of Jamaica, or upon the earth, existed two such villains as Chakra, the Coromantee, and Jessuron, the Jew!

He could see the conspirators as well as hear them. The chinks between the bamboos enabled him to obtain a view of both.

The Jew, slightly blown with his long walk against the hill, had dropped into a sitting attitude upon the truck-like bedstead; while the Coromantee stood before him, lean-

ing against the buttress of the tree which formed one side of his dwelling.

The conversation had commenced before Cubina came up. It could not have proceeded far. The lard lamp seemed recently lit. Besides, the Maroon knew that he had been only a few minutes behind them. The plot, therefore, whatever it was, had not yet made much progress.

So reasoned the listener; but it soon appeared that it was the continuation of a plot, and not its first conception, to which he was to become privy—a plot so demoniac as to include *murder* in its design!

The Jew, when Cubina first got eyes on him, appeared as if he had just given utterance to some angry speech. His dark, weasel-like orbs were sparkling in their sunken sockets, with a fiendish light. The goggles were off, and the eyes could be seen. In his right hand the eternal umbrella was grasped, with a firm clutch, as if held in menace!

Chakra, on the other hand, appeared cowed and pleading. Though almost twice the size, and apparently twice the strength of the old Israelite, he looked at that moment as if in fear of him!

"Gorry, Massr Jake!" said he, in an appealing tone; "how ebber wa' *I* to know de Cussus wam a gwine so soon? A nebber speered ob dat; an' you nebber tole me you wanted de obeah-spell to work fasser dan war safe. Ef a'd a know'd dat, a kud a fotch de dam Cussus out o' him boots in de shake ob a cat's tail—dat cud a a'did!"

"Ach!" exclaimed the Jew, with an air of unmistakable chagrin; "he's going to shlip us. S'help me, he will! And now, when I wants more ash ever the shpell upon him. I'sh heard something from thish girl Cynthy of a conshpiracy against myshelf. Sheesh heard them plotting in the summer-house in the Cushtos's garden."

"Wha' dey plot 'gain you, Massr Jake? Who am dey dat go plottin'?"

"The Cushtos is one, the other ish that scamp son of Cubina, the Maroon—the young Cubina. You knowsh him?"

"Dat same a know well 'nuf."

"Ah! the proud Cushtos don't know—though he hash his sushpicions—that hish wife Quasheba wash the mishtress of a Maroon. Ha! ha! ha! And she luffed the mulatto better as ever she luffed Vanities Vochan! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Dat am berry near de troof," observed the negro, with a thoughtful air.

"Little dosh the Cushtos think," continued Jessuron, without heeding the interpolation, "that thish young fellow, whosh a-helpin' him to conshpire againsht me, is a sort of a son to hish consheited worship. Ha! ha! ha!"

It was startling intelligence for the listener outside the door. It was the first intimation the young Maroon ever had as to who was his mother.

Some vague hints had been conveyed to him in early childhood; but his memory recalled them only as dreams; and he himself had never allowed them expression. His father he had known well—called, as himself, Cubina, the Maroon. But his mother, who or what she had been, he had never known.

Was it possible, then, that the quadroon, Quasheba—of whose fame he, too, had heard—was it true she was his own mother? That "Lilly Quasheba," the beautiful, the accomplished daughter of the Custos Vaughan, was his half-sister?

He could not doubt it. The conversation that followed put him in possession of further details, and more ample proofs. Besides, such

relationships were too common in the Island of Jamaica, to make them matter either of singularity or surprise.

Notwithstanding, the listener was filled with astonishment—far more than that—for the revelation was one to stir his soul to emotions of the strangest and strongest kind. New thoughts sprang up at the announcement; new vistas opened before the horoscope of his future; new ties were established within his heart, hitherto unfelt and unknown.

Stifling his new-sprung emotions as well as he was able—promising them indulgence at some other time—he re-bent his ear to listen.

He heard enough to satisfy him that he had a sister—a half-sister, it is true—but still a sister.

The next point determined on between the conspirators was equally calculated to startle and astonish him. It was no less than a design to render that sister *brotherless!*

"You musht put the shpell on *him*, too," said the Jew; "for heesh the principal in thish plot againsht me. Even if the Cushtos wash out of the way, thish Captain Cubina

will go to some other magistrate to carry out hish design. There will be plenty to help him. You musht shpell *him*, and soon ash you can, Shakra. There'sh no time to loose —not a minnit, s'help me!"

"A do wha a can, Massr Jake; but a mout 's well tell ye, that it a'nt so easy to put de spell on a Maroon. It coss me more'n twenty year to put de obeah on. him ole fadder, and I'se a been tryin' um on dis young Cubina fo' some time—ebber since him fadder die. A hate de young un, same a hated de ole un. You knows why a hate boaf."

"I knowsh all that—I knowsh all that."

"Wa, den! a do ma bess. Dat ar m'latta gib me no hope. She soon 'dminster de spell ef she hab chance—kase she think um de lub drink. She no hab chance, fo' Cubina he no let her come nigh o' him. Nebba mind: Chakra he find oppotunity some day; 'fore long he put de death-spell on de son ob dat quaderoom."

"Perhaps not so soon!" was the mental rejoinder of him who listened to this confident declaration.

"It'sh less matter about him than the other!" cried the Jew, giving way to a fresh

burst of rage. "S'help me! the Cushtos is going to shlip out of my fingers—the eshtate —all! Ach!" he ejaculated, as his disappointment came more palpably before him, "you hash played me false, Shakra! I b'lief you've been playin' me false!"

As the Jew gave utterance to this conjectural speech, he started to his feet—taking a tighter hold upon his umbrella, and standing before his *vis-à-vis* in a threatening attitude.

"No, Massr Jake," replied the myal-man, without altering the air of obeisance he had hitherto assumed,—"no—nuffin ob dat—anyhow, I'se can say dar's nuffin ob dat. You yaseff sabbey well 'nuff a hab as good reezun as you to make de spell work, an' I tell you *it shall work!*"

"Yesh! when too late—too late! I don't care then. If the Cushtos get to Spanish Town—if he procuresh the shpecial act, I'm a ruined Shew! I don't care a shtraw if the death-shpell wash put on myshelf! I don't!

This speech was rather a soliloquy than addressed to Chakra, who listened to it without clearly comprehending its import: for the chief motive which was stimulating the Jew was still unknown to his fellow-conspirator.

"I tell you," resumed Jessuron, still in threatening speech, "I believe you hash been fooling me, Shakra! You hash some interest of your own—perhaps, with thish Lilly Quasheba. Ha! never mind! I tell you thish time—I tell you, Shakra, if the shpell dosh fail—yesh, if it fail, and the Cushtos reach the capital—where he ish going—I tell you, Shakra, you may look out for shqualls! You loosh your monish I promised you. Ay, you may loosh your life ash well. I hash only to shay a word, and the Duppy's Hole will be searched by the houndsh of the law. Now will you do your besht to keep the Cushtos from reaching the capital of the Island?"

As Jessuron finished the speech containing this conditional threat, he moved in the direction of the door, apparently with the intention of taking his departure.

The Maroon, perceiving the movement, stepped further back into the shadow of the cotton-tree—taking care to conceal himself effectually.

This change of position prevented him from hearing what subsequently passed between the two conspirators. Some more conversation there was on both sides—an interchange of

it—which lasted for several minutes; but although the listener could hear the sound of their voices, he was unable to make out the words spoken by either.

What was said by the Jew was principally a repetition of his menace—in terms the most emphatic he could employ; while Chakra, with equal emphasis, repeated his promises to accomplish the nefarious purpose already agreed upon between them.

"A promise, Massr Jake," said the myal-man, in conclusion, "by de great Accompong, a do ma bess. Ef de Cussus 'trive 'scape, den you do wid ole Chakra whasomediver you hab mind to. 'Liver him up, ef you like! Ha! de Cussus no 'scape. Dis night Cynthy hab take bottle in her basket of de 'trongest kind. It do de bizness in 'bout twenty-fo' hour. *Daat am de true death-spell.* Whugh!"

"In twenty-four hours? You ish shure, Shakra? you ish shure?"

"Shoo' as a 'm now in de Duppy Hole, Massr Jake. Doan' you hab no mo' doubt ob ole Chakra. He hab no lub fo' Cussus Va'ghan mo' dan youseff. P'raps he lub de Cussus' dau'ter, but dat am berry diffrent sort ob 'fecshun. Whugh!"

With this speech of fiendish signification the dialogue ended; and the Jew was seen stepping outside, followed by his confederate.

Both walked away from the spot, Chakra taking the lead, the Maroon closely watching their movements.

On reaching the canoe the conspirators stepped aboard, and the craft was paddled over the lagoon.

Cubina waited for its return; and then, seeing Chakra safe within his hut, he hastened back to the water; and, as before, swimming under the shadow of the rock, he re-ascended the tree stairway, and stood once more on the summit of the cliff.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A STORMY SCENE.

On emerging from the Duppy's Hole, the penn-keeper tracked it, as straight as the path would permit him, towards his own home. He walked with hurried steps, as if he had some purpose before him beyond that of going to bed. Late as was the hour—or early, it should rather be said, since it was getting on for day-break—in the eye of the old Israelite there was no sign of sleepiness; but, on the contrary, a wide-awake expression that betokened his intention to accomplish some desired object before retiring to rest.

The mutterings which fell from his lips, as he moved onward among the trees, told that his discontent still continued. Chakra's assurances, that had, for the moment, partially removed his ill-humour, on reflection failed to satisfy him. More than once before, the myal-man had given him promises which he had failed in keeping; and so might it be with

the promise of the death-spell. With this thought was revived in full vigour the apprehension that his enemy might escape; and, consequently, his deep-conceived scheme would result in ignominious failure.

The measures which the myal-man had taken for administering the *spell-medicine*—that bottle of strong waters which Cynthia carried home in her basket—had been revealed to the Jew. The revelation had been made—as suited the subject—in a low tone of voice; and it was this part of the dialogue between the two conspirators which Cubina had not heard.

But the Coromantee might be mistaken in his skill? The prescription might fail in producing the desired effect? The slave might not find the opportunity to administer it?

Considering the early hour at which the traveller was to start—Jessuron knew the hour—Cynthia might not have a chance to give the *medicine?* Or, frayed by contemplation of the fearful consequence, which she now knew would follow almost instantaneously upon the act, she might in the end shy from the dangerous duty? The intended victim

might, in the meantime, have become suspicious of the mixtures prepared by the mulatta, and decline to drink the deadly draught?

There were many chances that the Cust might escape.

"'There ish many a shlip between' and the lipsh,'" muttered the w man, quoting one of his favour "Ach! that ish true," he a emphasis, as the probabiliti more palpably before his

"S'help me!" cont tempt at self-consol deprived of my re whether he goesh t at home. Ach!" ing his tone to on that signify, beshide be shtopped, it wash Shoodith, for myshe suron! Mount W musht belong to t longs to Shoodith- Ach! what a pit after all I hash

"If it fail,"

of failure presenting a new phase to him, "if it fail, I'm a ruined man!—I am! Shoodith may want to marry this young fellow. I lieve she luffs him—I'm afeerd she doesh—he hasn't the worth of the shoosh he ds in. Blesh my shoul! I musht try to t. It musht go no further till I'm Cushtos. Not a shtep—not a usht be seen, and thish very musht see Shoodith before I

re of the interview thus tened his steps; and hadow of the dark elling.

orter at the gate—or slave inclosure, he mounted the silently along the a stranger in the . His object, in peared to be to o slept in a ham- g gallery.

d, however, that of a chamber which a light

was streaming. It was the sleeping apartment of the Jewess.

On arriving opposite the door, he knocked, not loudly—at the same time pronouncing, in a half whisper, the name "Shoodith!"

"That you, rabbi?" inquired a voice from within; while a footstep passing across the floor told either that the Jewess had not yet sought her couch, or had sought, and again forsaken it.

The door was opened; and the worthy father of this wakeful daughter passed inside.

"Well," said she, as he entered, "I won't inquire what errand you've been on, my good papa Jessuron: some slave speculation, I suppose? But what have I to do with it, that you should compel me to sit up for you till this time of the night? It's now near morning; and I am precious sleepy, I can tell you!"

"Ach! Shoodith, dear," replied the father, "everything ish goin' wrong! s'help me, everything!"

"Well, one might think so, from that doleful phiz of yours. What's troubling you now, my worthy parent?"

"Ach! Shoodith! Don't dishtress me by your speeches. I hash something of importance to shay to you, before I go to shleep."

"Say it quick, then: for I want to go to sleep myself. What is it, pray?"

"Well, Shoodith, dear, it ish this: you mushn't trifle any more with thish young fellow."

"What young fellow do you mean, my good man?"

"Vochan, of coursh—Mashter Vochan."

"Ho! ho! you've changed your tune. What's this about?"

"I hash reason, Shoodith; I hash reason."

"Who said I was trifling with him? Not I, father! Anything but that, I can assure you."

"That ish not what I mean, Shoodith."

"Well, then, what do you mean, old gentleman? Come now! make yourself intelligible!"

"I mean thish, Shoodith: you mushn't let things go any further with the young fellow—that ish, shoost now—till I knowsh something more about him. I thought he wash going to be rich—you know I thought that, mine

daughter—but I hash found out, thish very night, that—perhaps—he may never be worth a shingle shilling; and therefore, Shoodith, you couldn't think of marrying him—and mushn't think of it till we knowsh more about him!"

"Father!" replied the Jewess, at once throwing aside her habitual badinage, and assuming a serious tone, "it is too late! Did I not tell you that the tarantula might get caught in its own trap? The proverb has proved true; *I* am that unhappy spider!" .

"You don't say so, Shoodith?" inquired the father, with a look of alarm.

"I do! Yonder sleeps the fly"—and the speaker pointed along the gallery in the direction of the hammock—"secure from any harm I can ever do him. And were he as poor as he appears to be—as humble as the lowest slave on your estate—he is rich enough for me. Ah! it will be *his* fault, not *mine,* if he do not become my husband!"

The proud, determined tone in which the Jewess spoke, was only modified as she uttered the last words. The conjunctive form of the closing speech, with a certain duplexity of expression upon her countenance . showed that

she was not yet sure of the heart of Herbert Vaughan. Notwithstanding his attentions at the ball—notwithstanding much that had since occurred, there appeared to be a doubt—a trace of distrust that still lingered.

"Never, Shoodith!" cried the father, in a tone of determined authority. "You mushn't think of it! You shall never marry a pauper —never!"

"Pauper him as much as you like, father; he won't care for that, any more than I do."

"I shall disinherit you, Shoodith!" said the Jew, giving way to a feeling of spiteful resentment.

"As you like about that, too. Disinherit me at your pleasure. But remember, old man, it was you who began this game—you who set me to playing it; and if you are in danger of losing your stake—whatever it may be—I tell you you're in danger of losing *me*—that is, if he——"

The hypothetic thought—whatever it was —that at this crisis crossed the mind of the Jewess, was evidently one that caused her pain: as could be seen by the dark shadow that came mantling over her beautiful brow.

Whether or not she would have finished the

speech is uncertain. She was not permitted to proceed. The angry father interrupted her :—

"I won't argue with you now, Shoodith. Go to your bed, girl! go to 'shleep! Thish I promish you—and, s'help me, I keepsh my promish!—if thish pauper ish to be a pauper, he never marries you with my conshent; and without my conshent he never touches a shilling of my monish. You understand that, Shoodith?"

And without waiting to hear the reply—which was quite as defiant as his own declaration—the Jew hurried out of his daughter's chamber, and shuffled off along the verandah.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHERE NEXT?

THE Maroon, after mounting to the summit of the cliff, paused for some moments to reflect upon a course of action.

In his bosom were many new emotions, springing from the strange revelations to which he had just listened. His mind was in such a state of chaotic confusion, that it required some time to determine what he ought to do next, or whither he should go.

The thought that thrilled him most; was that which related to the discovery of his maternal relationship to Miss Vaughan. But this matter, however strange it was, required no immediate action to be taken on his part; and though the semi-fraternal affection, now felt for the first time, strengthened the romantic friendship which he had conceived for the young lady—whom he had now seen several times—still, from what he had overheard of the scheme of the conspirators, his

new-discovered sister did not appear to be in any danger. At least, not just then: though some horrid hints darkly thrown out by Chakra pointed to a probable peril at some future time.

That her father was in danger, Cubina could not doubt. Some demoniac plot had been prepared for the Custos, which was to deprive him even of life; and from what the Maroon could make out of the half-heard conversation of the conspirators, action was to be taken upon it, so early as the following morning.

Mr. Vaughan intended a journey. Yola had herself told him so; and the confabulation between Jessuron and Chakra confirmed it. Cynthia had been their informant; and it was evident that upon that very night she had brought the news from Mount Welcome. Evident, also, that the piece of intelligence thus conveyed had taken both the conspirators by surprise—causing them to hasten the *dénouement* of some devilish plan that before that night had not been quite ripe for execution.

All this was clear enough to the mind of the Maroon.

Equally clear was it, that the plan was no other than an atrocious plot to murder the proprietor of Mount Welcome; and that poison was the safe, silent weapon to be used —for Cubina was not unacquainted with the signification of the *death-spell of Obeah.* Before that night he had reason to believe that his own father had fallen by that secret shaft, and reasons to suspect that Chakra had shot it. What he had just heard confirmed his belief; and but that he saw the necessity of hastening to the rescue of the threatened Custos—and knew, moreover, that he could now find Chakra at any time—he would, in all probability, have avenged his father's death before leaving the Duppy's Hole.

The young Maroon, however, was a man of mild character—combining prudence with an extreme *sang froid*—that hindered him from bringing any event to a hasty or ambiguous ending. Though leaving Chakra for the time, he had determined soon to return to him.

The resurrection of the myal-man, though it at first very naturally astonished him, had soon ceased to be a mystery to the mind of the Maroon. In fact, the presence of the Jew had at once explained the whole thing.

Cubina conjectured, and correctly, that Jessuron had released the condemned criminal from his chains, and substituted the body of some dead negro—afterwards to become the representative of Chakra's skeleton.

For this the Jew, well known for wickedness, might have many motives.

The Maroon did not stay to speculate upon them. His thoughts were directed to the present and future rather than the past—to the rescue of the Custos, over whom a fearful fate seemed to impend.

It need not be denied that Cubina felt a certain friendship for the planter of Mount Welcome. Heretofore it had not been of a very ardent character; but the relations lately established between him and the Custos—in prospect of the process to be taken against their common enemy, the penn-keeper—had, of course, occasioned a fellow-feeling between them. The revelations of that night had strengthened the interest which the Maroon had begun to feel for Mr. Vaughan; and it is not to be wondered at that he now felt an honest desire to save the father of her, whom he was henceforth to regard as his own sister. To this end, then, were his thoughts directed.

He stayed not long to speculate upon the motives either of Chakra or Jessuron. Those of the myal-man he could guess to a certainty. Revenge for the sentence that exposed him to that fearful fate on the Jumbé Rock.

The motives of the Jew were less transparent. His deepest did not appear in the confabulation Cubina had overheard. Even Chakra did not know it. It might be fear of the approaching trial: which by some means the Jew had become apprised of.

But no. On reflection, Cubina saw it could not be that: for the conversation of the conspirators betrayed that their plot had been anterior to any information which the Jew could have had of the design of the Custos. It could not be that.

No matter what. Mr. Vaughan, the father of the generous young lady—she who had promised to make him a present of his beloved bride, and who now proved to be his own stepsister—her father was in danger!

Not a moment was to be lost. Without regard to motives, measures must be taken to avert that danger, and punish the miscreants who designed it.

For some minutes Cubina remained on the

spot, reflecting upon what step should be first taken.

Should he go direct to Mount Welcome and warn the Custos, by reporting to him what he had heard?

That was the first idea that presented itself to his mind; but at that hour Mr. Vaughan would be abed, and he—a Maroon—might not be admitted, unless, indeed, he could show, by pleading the urgency of his errand, good cause for arousing the Custos from his slumber.

This, undoubtedly, would he have done, had he known that the scheme of the conspirators had been definitely arranged. But, as already stated, he had not heard Chakra's concluding speech—referring to Cynthia and the bottle of strong medicine; and all the rest only pointed vaguely at some measures to be taken for frustrating the expedition to Spanish Town.

It would be time enough, thought he, to meet these measures by going to Mount Welcome in the morning. He could get there before Mr. Vaughan should start upon his journey. He could go at an early hour, but one when his appearance would not give cause for any unnecessary remark.

It did not occur to him to reflect, that the time of the traveller's departure from Mount Welcome—of which Cubina had not been apprised—might be anterior to that of his arrival there. The Maroon, thinking that the great Custos was not likely to inconvenience himself by early rising, had no apprehension of missing him by being himself too late.

With this confidence, then, he resolved to postpone his visit to Mount Welcome until some hour after daybreak; and, in the meantime, to carry out the preliminaries of a programme, referring to a very different affair, and which had been traced out the day before.

The first scene in this programme was to be a meeting with Herbert Vaughan. It had been appointed to take place between them on the following morning; and on the same spot where the two young men had first encountered one another—in the glade, under the great *ceiba*.

The interview was of Herbert's own seeking, for, although neither had seen the other since the day on which the runaway had been rescued, some items of intelligence had passed

between them—Quaco acting as the medium of their correspondence.

Herbert had an object in seeking the interview. He desired a conference with Cubina, in hopes of obtaining from him an explanation of more than one circumstance that had lately arisen to puzzle and perplex him.

His patron's suspicious story about the red runaway was one of these circumstances. Herbert had heard from Quaco that the slave was still staying with the Maroons in their mountain-town; and had been adopted into their little community—in fact, had himself become a Maroon.

This did not correspond with the account given by Jessuron. Of course, Quaco could not state the reasons. The secrecy enjoined by the Custos kept Cubina's tongue tied upon that theme; and his own men knew nothing of the design which their captain had conceived against the Jew.

This was not the only matter which mystified the young Englishman, and which he was in hopes of having cleared up by Cubina. His own position at the penn—of late developing itself in a manner to surprise and startle him—also needed elucidation. There was no one

near of whom he could ask a question in regard to it, and never in his life did he stand more in need of a confidant.

In this dilemma he had thought of his old acquaintance, the Maroon captain. The intelligent mulatto appeared to be the very man. Herbert remembered the promise made at parting, his own conditional acceptance of it, which now appeared prophetic; since the contingency then expressed had come to pass.

He had need to avail himself of the friendly proffer; and for that purpose had he made the appointment under the *ceiba*.

Equally desirous was the Maroon to meet with the young Englishman. He had preserved a grateful recollection of his generous interference in what appeared a very unequal combat; and, so far from having lost sight of his noble ally, he had been keeping him in mind—after a fashion that was calculated to show the deep gratitude with which Herbert's conduct had inspired him.

He longed for an opportunity of giving renewed expression to this gratitude; but he had other reasons for wishing to see the young Englishman just then; and the meeting with Yola on that same night had an object some-

what different from the mere repetition of love vows—already pronounced over and over again, upon a score of distinct occasions.

Now that the night had nearly passed, and that the morning was nigh, the Maroon, instead of returning to his mountain home, decided on going back to the glen, and spending the few hours of interval under the shadow of the *ceiba*.

Indeed, the time would not allow of his returning home. The sun would be up in three or four hours. A little after sunrise was the appointed time for the meeting with Herbert Vaughan. Before that hour should arrive, he could scarce reach his own "town" and get back again. The thing, therefore, was not to be thought of.

To sleep under a tree, or *on* one, was no new thing for Cubina. It would never occur to him to consider such a couch as inconvenient. In his hog-hunting excursions—often continuing for days and even weeks—he was accustomed to repose upon the cold ground—upon the swirl of withered leaves—upon the naked rock—anywhere. Not much did it matter to a Maroon to be sheltered by a roof—not much, whether a tree shadowed his

slumbers, or whether on his grassy couch he saw shining over him the starry canopy of the sky. These were but the circumstances of his every-day life.

Having come to the conclusion that his best plan would be to pass the remaining hours of the night under the *ceiba*, he made no further delay by the Duppy's Hole; but turning into the path that led down the slope he proceeded back towards the glade.

He moved down the mountain road, slowly, and with some degree of circumspection. He went slowly, because there was no need for haste. It would be several hours before the young Englishman should be abroad. As already stated, a little after sunrise was the time agreed upon, through the messenger Quaco. There was no particular reason for Cubina's being in a hurry to get to the glade —unless he wished to have more time for his nap under the tree.

For sleep, however, he had but little relish just then. Wild thoughts, consequent on the strange disclosures he had listened to, were passing through his mind; and these were sufficient to deprive him even of the power of sleep.

He moved onward with circumspection from a different motive. He knew that Jessuron, in returning to his penn, must have taken the same path. Should the latter be loitering—since he had only started but a few minutes before—Cubina might overtake him; and he had no wish to see any more of the Jew for that night—or, at all events, to be himself seen by the latter. To avoid all chance of an encounter, he stopped at intervals, and reconnoitred the wood ahead of him.

He arrived in the glade without seeing either Jew, Christian, or living being of any kind. The penn-keeper had passed through a good while before. Cubina could tell this by an observation which he made on coming out into the open ground. A mock-bird, perched on a low tree that stood directly by the path, was singing with all its might. The Maroon had heard its melody long before entering the glade. Had any one passed recently, the bird would have forsaken its perch—as it did on the approach of Cubina himself.

On reaching the rendezvous, his first concern was to kindle a fire. Sleep in a wet shirt was not to be thought of; and every

stitch upon his body had been soaked in swimming the lagoon. Otherwise, it would not have mattered about a fire. He had nothing to cook upon it; nor was he hungry —having already eaten his supper.

Kindled by a woodman's skill, a fire soon blazed up; and the hunter stood erect beside it, turning himself at intervals to dry his garments, still dripping with water.

He was soon smoking all over, like freshly-slaked lime; and, in order to pass the time more pleasantly, he commenced smoking in another sense—the *nicotian*—his pipe and tobacco-pouch affording him an opportunity for this indulgence.

Possibly the nicotine may have stimulated his reflective powers: for he had not taken more than a dozen puffs at his pipe, when a sudden and somewhat uneasy movement seemed to say that some new reflection had occurred to him. Simultaneous with the movement, a muttered soliloquy escaped from his lips.

"*Crambo!*" exclaimed he, giving utterance to his favourite shibboleth; "say he should come an hour after sunrise—at least another we should be in getting to Mount Welcome.

Por Dios! it may be too late then! Who knows what time the Custos may fancy to set out?" he added, after a pause; "I did not think of that. How stupid of me not to have asked Yola!

"*Crambo!*" he again exclaimed, after another interval passed in silent reflection. "It won't do to leave things to chance, where a man's life is in danger. Who knows what scheme these John Crows have contrived? I couldn't hear the whole of their palaver. If Master Vaughan was only here, we might go to Mount Welcome at once. Whatever quarrel he may have with the uncle, he won't wish to let him be murdered—no likelihood of that. Besides, the young fellow's interference in this matter, if I mistake not, would be likely to make all right between them—I'd like that, both for his sake and hers—ah! hers especially, after what Yola's told me. *Santa Virgen!* wouldn't that be a disappointment to the old dog of a Jew! Never mind! I'll put a spark in his powder before he's many days older! The young Englishman must know all. I'll tell him all; and after that, if he consents to become the son-in-law of Jacob Jessuron, he would deserve a dog's——.

Bah! it cannot be! I won't believe it till he tells me so himself; and then——.

"*Por Dios!*" exclaimed he, suddenly interrupting the above train of reflections and passing to another. "It won't do for me to stay here till he comes. Two hours after sunrise, and the Custos might be cold. I'll go down to the Jew's penn at once, and hang about till I see young Vaughan. He'll be stirring about daybreak, and that 'll save an hour, anyhow. A word with him, and we can soon cross to Mount Welcome."

In obedience to the thought, and without staying to complete the drying of his habiliments, the Maroon stepped out from the glade; and turning into the track—little used—that led towards the Happy Valley, proceeded in that direction.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DARK COMPACT.

On closing so abruptly the stormy dialogue with his daughter, Jessuron proceeded to his own sleeping apartment—like the others, opening upon the verandah.

Before entering the room, he glanced along the gallery, towards the suspended hammock.

In that hammock slept Herbert Vaughan. His long sea-voyage had accustomed him to the use of a swing couch—even to a liking for it; and as the night was warm, he had preferred the hammock to his bed in the contiguous chamber.

Jessuron had a fear that the angry conversation might have been overheard by the occupant of the hammock; for, in the excitement of temper, neither he nor Judith had observed the precaution of speaking low.

The hammock hung motionless, oscillating scarce an inch; and this only under the in-

fluence of the night breeze that blew gently along the verandah. Its occupant appeared to be in the middle of a profound slumber.

Satisfied of this, the Jew returned to his own chamber. There was no light, and on entering, he sat down in the darkness. The moon shining in through the window gave him light enough to discover a chair; and into that he had flung himself, instead of seeking his couch.

For a time he displayed no intention either of undressing or betaking himself to bed; but remained in the high-backed chair in which he had seated himself, buried in some reflection, silent as profound. We are permitted to know his thoughts.

"S'help me, she'll marry him!" was that which came uppermost. "She will, s'help me!" continued he, repeating the reflection in an altered form, "shpite of all I can shay or do to prevent her! She ish a very deffil when raished—and she'll have her own way, she will. Ach! what ish to be done?—what ish to be done?"

Here a pause occurred in the reflections, while the Jew, with puzzled brain, was groping for an answer to his mental interrogatory.

"It ish of no ushe!" he continued, after a time, the expression on his face showing that he had not yet received a definite reply. "It'sh no ushe to opposhe her. She'd run away with thish young man to a certainty!

"I might lock her up, but that ish no good. She'd contrive to escape some time. I couldn't alwaysh keep her under lock and key? No—no, it ish imposhible!

"And if she marriesh him without the monish—without the great shugar eshtate! Blesh me!—that ish ruin!

"It musht not be. If she marriesh him, she musht marry Mount Welcome. She musht! she musht!

"But how ish it to be? How ish he to be made the heir?"

Again the Jew appeared to puzzle his brains for an answer to this last interrogatory.

"Ha!" he exclaimed aloud, at the same time starting from his chair, as if the solution had discovered itself; "I hash it! I hash it! —the Spaniards! I hash it!

"Yesh," he continued, striking the ferrule of his umbrella against the floor, "theesh are the very fellows for the shob—worth a sheore of Shakra's shpells, and hish bottles to boot!

There ish no fear that their medishin will fail. S'help me, no! Now, ash I think of it," continued he, "that ish the plan—the very besht. There ish no other safe and sure, like that ish. Ha! Cushtos! you shan't eshcape yet. Ha! Shoodith, mine girl, you ish welcome to your way; you shall have the young man after all!"

On giving utterance to these ambiguous speeches, the Jew dropped back into his chair, and sat for some minutes in silent but earnest meditation.

The matter of his meditation may be known by the act that followed.

"There ishn't an hour to be losht!" muttered he, starting to his feet, and hurriedly making for the door; "no, not ash much ash a minute. I musht see them now. The Cushtos ish to shtart at sunrishe. The wench hash said it. They'll joosht have time to get upon hish track. S'help me," he added, opening the door, and glancing up at the sky, "ash I live, it'sh mosht sunrishe now!"

Sticking his beaver firmly upon his head, and taking a fresh clutch of the everlasting umbrella, he rushed rapidly out of the verandah, crossed the courtyard, re-passed the

porter at his own gate, and then traversing the little enclosure outside, stood in the open fields.

He did not stand long—only to look around him, and see that the ground was clear of stragglers.

Satisfied on this head, he proceeded onward.

At the distance of some three or four hundred yards from the outside stockade stood a detached cabin, more than half hidden among the trees.

Towards this he directed his steps.

Five minutes sufficed for him to reach it; and, on arriving at the door, he knocked upon it with the butt of his umbrella.

"*Quien es?*" spoke a voice from within.

"It'sh me, Manuel—me—Shessuron!" replied the Jew.

"It's the *Dueno*" (master), was heard muttering one of the Spaniards to the other—for the cabin was the dwelling of these notable negro-hunters.

"*Carajo!* what does the old *ladron* want at this hour?" interrogated the first speaker, in his own tongue, which he knew was not understood by the Jew. "*Maldito!*" added he,

in a grumbling voice; "it's not very pleasant to be waked up in this fashion. Besides, I was dreaming of that yellow-skin that killed my dogs. I thought I had my *machete* up to the hilt in his carcase. What a pity I was only dreaming it!"

"*Ta-ta!*" interrupted the other; "be silent, Andres. The old *ganadero* is impatient. *Vamos!* I'm coming, Señor Don Jacob!"

"Make hashte, then!" answered the Jew from without. "I hash important bishness with both of yoush."

At this moment the door opened; and he who answered to the name of Manuel appeared in the doorway.

Without waiting for an invitation, Jessuron stepped inside the cabin.

"Does your business require a candle, señor?" inquired the Spaniard.

"No—no!" answered the Jew, quickly and impressively, as if to prevent the striking of a light. "It ish only talk; we can do it in the darknesh."

And darkness, black and profound, was most appropriate to the conversation that followed. Its theme was *murder*—the murder of Loftus Vaughan!

The plan proposed was for the two Spaniards —fit instruments for such purpose—to waylay the Custos upon the road—in some dark defile of the forest—anywhere—it mattered not, so long as it was on this side of Spanish Town.

"Fifty poundsh apeesh; goot Island currenshy," was the reward promised—offered and accepted.

Jessuron instructed his brace of *entrepreneurs* in all the details of the plan. He had learnt from Cynthia that the Custos intended to take the southern road, calling at Savanna-le-Mer. It was a roundabout way to the capital; but Jessuron had his suspicions why that route had been chosen. He knew that Savanna was the assize town of Cornwall; and the Custos might have business there relating to himself, Prince Cingües, and his two dozen Mandingoes!

It was not necessary to instruct the *caçadores* in these multifarious matters. There was no time to spend on any other than the details of their murderous plan; and these were made known to them with the rapidity of rapine itself.

In less than twenty minutes from the time he had entered the cabin the Jew issued out again, and walked back, with joyous mien and agile step, towards his dark dwelling.

CHAPTER XXXV.

STALKING THE SLEEPER.

CUBINA, on arriving near the precincts of the penn, moved forward with increased caution. He knew that the penn-keeper was accustomed to keep dogs and night-watchers around his enclosure, not only to prevent the cattle and other quadrupeds from straying, but also the black bipeds that filled his baracoons.

The Maroon was conscious, moreover, that his own attitude towards the slave-merchant was, at this time, one of extreme hostility. His refusal to restore the runaway had been a declaration of open war between them; and the steps he had since taken in conjunction with the Custos—which he now knew to be no longer a secret to the slave-stealer—could not otherwise than render him an object of the Jew's most bitter hatred.

Knowing all this, he felt the necessity of caution in approaching the place: for should

the penn-keeper's people find him prowling about the premises, they would be certain to capture him, if they could, and carry him before Jacob Jessuron, J.P., where he might expect to be treated to a little "justice's justice."

With this prospect before him, in the event of being detected, he approached the Jew's dwelling as cautiously as if he had been a burglar about to break into it.

It was towards the back of the house that he was advancing from the fields—or rather, the side of it, opposite to that on which lay the cattle and slave enclosures.

He had made a short circuit to approach by this side, conjecturing that the others would be more likely to be guarded by the slave and cattle watchers.

The fields, half returned to the condition of a forest, rendered it easy to advance under cover. A thick, second growth of logwood, bread-nut, and calabash trees covered the ground; and nearer the walls the old garden, now ruinate, still displayed a profusion of fruit trees growing in wild luxuriance, such as guavas, mangoes, paw-paws, orange and lemon, sops, custard-apples, the akee, and

avocada pear. Here and there a cocoa-palm raised its tufted crown far above the topmost spray of the humbler fruit-trees, its long, feathery fronds gently oscillating under the silent zephyrs of the night.

On getting within about a hundred yards of the house Cubina formed the intention not to go any nearer just then. The plan he had traced out was to station himself in some position where he could command a view of the verandah—or as much of it as it was possible to see from one place. There he would remain until daybreak.

His conjecture was, that Herbert Vaughan would make his appearance as soon as the day broke, and this was all the more probable on account of his engagement with the Maroon himself.

The *protégé* of Jessuron would show himself in the verandah on leaving his chamber. He could not do otherwise, since all the sleeping rooms—and Cubina knew this—opened outward upon the gallery.

Once seen, a signal by some means—by Cubina showing himself outside, or calling the young Englishman by name—would bring about the desired interview, and hasten the

execution of the project which the Maroon had conceived.

A slight elevation of the ground, caused by the crumbling ruins of an old wall, furnished the *vidette* station desired; and the Maroon mounting upon this, took his stand to watch the verandah. He could see the long gallery from end to end on two sides of the dwelling, and he knew that it extended no farther.

Though the house glistened under a clear moonlight, the verandah itself was in shade; as was also the courtyard in front—the old grey pile projecting its sombre shadow beyond the walls that surrounded it. At the end, however, the moonbeams, slanting diagonally from the sky, poured their light upon the floor of the verandah, there duplicating the strong bar-like railing with which the gallery was inclosed.

The Maroon had not been many minutes upon the stand he had taken, when an object in the verandah arrested his attention. As his eye became more accustomed to the shadowy darkness inside, he was able to make out something that resembled a hammock, suspended crosswise, and at some height above the balustrade of the verandah. It was near

that end where the moonlight fell upon the floor.

As the moon continued to sink lower in the sky, her beams were flung farther along the gallery; and the object which had attracted the attention of Cubina came more into the light. It was a hammock, and evidently occupied. The taut cordage told that some one was inside it.

"If it should be the young Englishman himself!" was the conjectural reflection of Cubina.

If so, it might be possible to communicate with him at once, and save the necessity of waiting till day-break.

How was the Maroon to be satisfied that it was he? It might be some one else! It might be Ravener, the overseer; and Cubina desired no conversation with him. What step could he take to solve this uncertainty?

As the Maroon was casting about for some scheme that would enable him to discover who was the occupant of the hammock, he noticed that the moonbeams had now crept nearly up to it, and in a few minutes more would be shining full upon it. He could already per-

ceive, though very dimly, the face and part of the form of the sleeper inside. Could he only get to some elevated position a little nearer to the house, he might be able to make out who it was.

He scanned the ground with a quick glance. A position sufficiently elevated presented itself, but one not so easy to be reached. A cocoa-nut palm stood near the wall, whose crest of radiating fronds overlooked the verandah, drooping towards it. Could he but reach this tree unobserved, and climb up to its crown, he might command a close view of him who slept in the swinging couch.

A second sufficed to determine him; and, crawling silently forward, he clasped the stem of the cocoa-tree, and "swarmed" upward. The feat was nothing to Cubina, who could climb like a squirrel.

On reaching the summit of the palm, he placed himself in the centre of its leafy crown —where he had the verandah directly under his eyes, and so near that he could almost have sprung into it.

The hammock was within ten feet of him; in a downward direction. He could have pitched his tobacco-pipe upon the face of the

sleeper. The moonlight was now full upon it. It was the face of Herbert Vaughan!

Cubina recognized it at the first glance; and he was reflecting how he could awake the young Englishman without causing an alarm, when he heard a door turn upon its hinges. The sound came up from the courtyard; and on looking in that direction, Cubina saw that the gate leading out to the cattle enclosure was in the act of being opened.

Presently a man passed through, entering from the outside; and the gate, by some other person unseen, was closed behind him.

He who had entered walked directly towards the dwelling; and, mounting the steps, made his way into the verandah.

While crossing the courtyard, the moonlight, for a moment, fell upon his face, discovering to Cubina the sinister countenance of the Jew.

"I must have passed him on the path!" reflected the Maroon. "But no, that couldn't be," he added, correcting himself; "I saw his return track in the mud-hole just by. He must have got here before me. Like enough, he's been back, and out again on some other dark business. *Crambo!* it's true enough

what I've heard say of him: that he hardly ever goes to sleep. Our people have met him in the woods at all hours of the night. I can understand it now that I know the partner he's got up there. *Por Dios!* to think of Chakra being still alive!"

The Maroon paused in his reflections; and kept his eye sharply bent upon the shadowy form that, like a spirit of darkness, was silently flitting through the corridor. He was in hopes that the Jew would soon retire to his chamber.

So long as the latter remained outside, there was not the slightest chance for Cubina to communicate with the occupant of the hammock without being observed. Worse than that, the Maroon was now in danger of being himself seen. Exposed as he was upon the cocoa—with nothing to shelter him from observation but its few straggling fronds—he ran every risk of his presence being detected. It was just a question of whether the Jew might have occasion to look upwards; if so, he could scarce fail to perceive the dark *silhouette* of a man, outlined, as it was, against the light blue of the sky.

That would be a discovery of which Cubina

dreaded the consequences, and with reason. It might not only frustrate the intended interview with the young Englishman, but might end in his own capture and detention —the last a contingency especially to be avoided.

Under this apprehension the Maroon stirred neither hand nor foot; but kept himself silent and rigid. In this attitude of immobility he looked like some statue, placed in a sedentary posture upon the summit of a Corinthian column — the crushed crocus represented by the fronds of the palm-tree.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A MISSION FOR THE MAN-HUNTERS.

CUBINA for some time preserved his constrained position. He dared not derange it; since the Jew still stayed in the shadowy corridor—sometimes moving about; but more generally standing at the head of the wooden stairway, and looking across the courtyard, towards the gate through which he had come in. It seemed as if he was expecting some one to enter after him.

This conjecture of Cubina's proved correct. The great gate was heard once more turning on its hinges; and, after a word or two spoken by the black porter outside, and answered by a voice of different tone, two men were seen stepping inside the court.

As they passed under the moonlight, Cubina recognized them. Their lithe, supple forms, and swarthy angular lineaments, enabled him to identify the Cuban *caçadores*.

They walked straight up to the stairway, at the bottom of which both stopped.

The Jew, on seeing them inside the gate, had gone back into a room that opened upon the verandah.

He was gone but for an instant; and, coming out again, he returned to the top of the stairway.

One of the Spaniards, stepping up, reached out, and received something from his hand. What it was Cubina could not have told, but for the words of the Jew that accompanied the action.

"There'sh the flashk," said he; "it ish the besht brandy in Shamaica. And now," he continued, in an accent of earnest appeal, "my goot fellish! you hashn't a minute to shpare. Remember the big monish you're to gain; and don't let thish runaway eshcape!"

"No fear about that, Señor Don Jacob," replied he who received the flask. "*Carrai!* he'll have long legs to get out of our way—once we're well on the trail of him."

And without further dialogue or delay, the *caçador* descended the stair, rejoined his comrade, and both hurriedly re-crossing the court-

yard, disappeared through the door by which they had entered.

"An expedition after some poor slave!" muttered Cubina to himself. "I hope the scoundrels won't catch him, anyhow, and I pity him if they do. After all, they're no great hands at the business, spite of their braggadocio."

With this professional reflection, the Maroon once more bent his eyes upon the form that remained in the shadow of the verandah.

"Surely," conjectured he, "the old John Crow will now go to his roost? Or has he more of the like business on hand? Till he's out of that I can't make a move. I durstn't stir, not for the life of me!"

To the joy of Cubina, the Jew at that moment stepped back into his chamber—the door of which had been left standing open.

"Good!" mentally ejaculated the Maroon; "I hope he'll stay in his hole, now that he's in it. I don't want to see any more of him this night. *Crambo!*"

As the exclamation indicated, the congratulatory speech was cut short by the re-appearance of the Jew; not in his blue body-coat, as

before, but wrapped in a sort of gabardine, or ample dressing-gown, the skirts of which fell down to his feet. His hat had been removed —though the skull-cap, of dirty whitish hue, still clung around his temples; for it was never doffed.

To the consternation of Cubina he came out, dragging a chair after him: as if he meant to place it in the verandah and take a seat upon it.

And this was precisely his intention, for, after drawing the chair—a high-backed one— out into the middle of the gallery, he planted it firmly upon the floor, and then dropped down into it.

The moment after, Cubina saw sparks, accompanied by a sound that indicated the concussion of flint and steel. The Jew was striking a light!

For what purpose?

The smell of burning tobacco borne along the gallery, and ascending to Cubina's nostrils upon the summit of the palm, answered that question. A red coal could be seen gleaming between the nose and chin of the Israelite. He was smoking a cigar!

Cubina saw this with chagrin. How long

would the operation last? Half-an-hour—an hour, perhaps? Ay, maybe till daybreak—now not very distant.

The situation had changed for the worse. The Maroon could not make the slightest move towards the awakening of Herbert. He dared not shift his own position, lest his presence should be betrayed to the Jew. He dared not stir upon the tree, much less come down from it!

He saw that he was in a fix; but there was no help for it. He must wait till the Jew had finished his cigar: though there was no certainty that even that would bring the *séance* to a termination.

Summoning all the patience he could command, he kept his perch, silent and motionless, though anxious, and suffering from chagrin.

For a long hour, at least, did he continue in this desperate dilemma—until his limbs ached underneath him, and his composure was well-nigh exhausted. Still the Jew stuck to his chair, as if glued to the seat—silent and motionless as Cubina himself.

The latter fancied that not only a first cigar, but a second, and, perhaps, a third, had been lighted and smoked; but in the sombre

shadow, in which the smoker sat, he could not be certain how many. More than one, however, from the time spent in the operation; for during the full period of an hour a red coal could be seen glowing at the tip of that aquiline proboscis.

Cubina now perceived what troubled him exceedingly—the blue dawn breaking over the tops of the trees! By slightly turning his head he could see the golden gleam of sunlight tinting the summit of the Jumbé Rock!

"*Crambo!* what was to be done?" so ran his reflections.

If he stayed there much longer he might be sure of being discovered. The slaves would soon be starting to their work—the overseer and drivers would soon be out and about. One or other could not fail to see him upon the tree! He would be lucky now to escape himself, without thinking any longer of the hammock or him who slept within its tight-drawn meshes.

While considering how he might slip unperceived from the tree he glanced once more towards the occupant of the chair. The gradually brightening dawn, which had been filling him

with apprehension, now favoured him. It enabled him to perceive that the Jew was asleep!

With his head thrown back against the sloping upholstery, Jessuron had at last surrendered to the powerful divinity of dreams. His goggles were off; and Cubina could see that the wrinkled lids were closed over his sunken orbs.

Undoubtedly he was asleep. His whole attitude confirmed it. His legs lay loosely over the front of the chair—his arms hung down at the sides: and the blue umbrella rested upon the floor at his feet. This last evidence of somnolency was not even counterbalanced by the stump of a cigar, burnt close, and still sticking between his teeth!

END OF VOL. II.

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